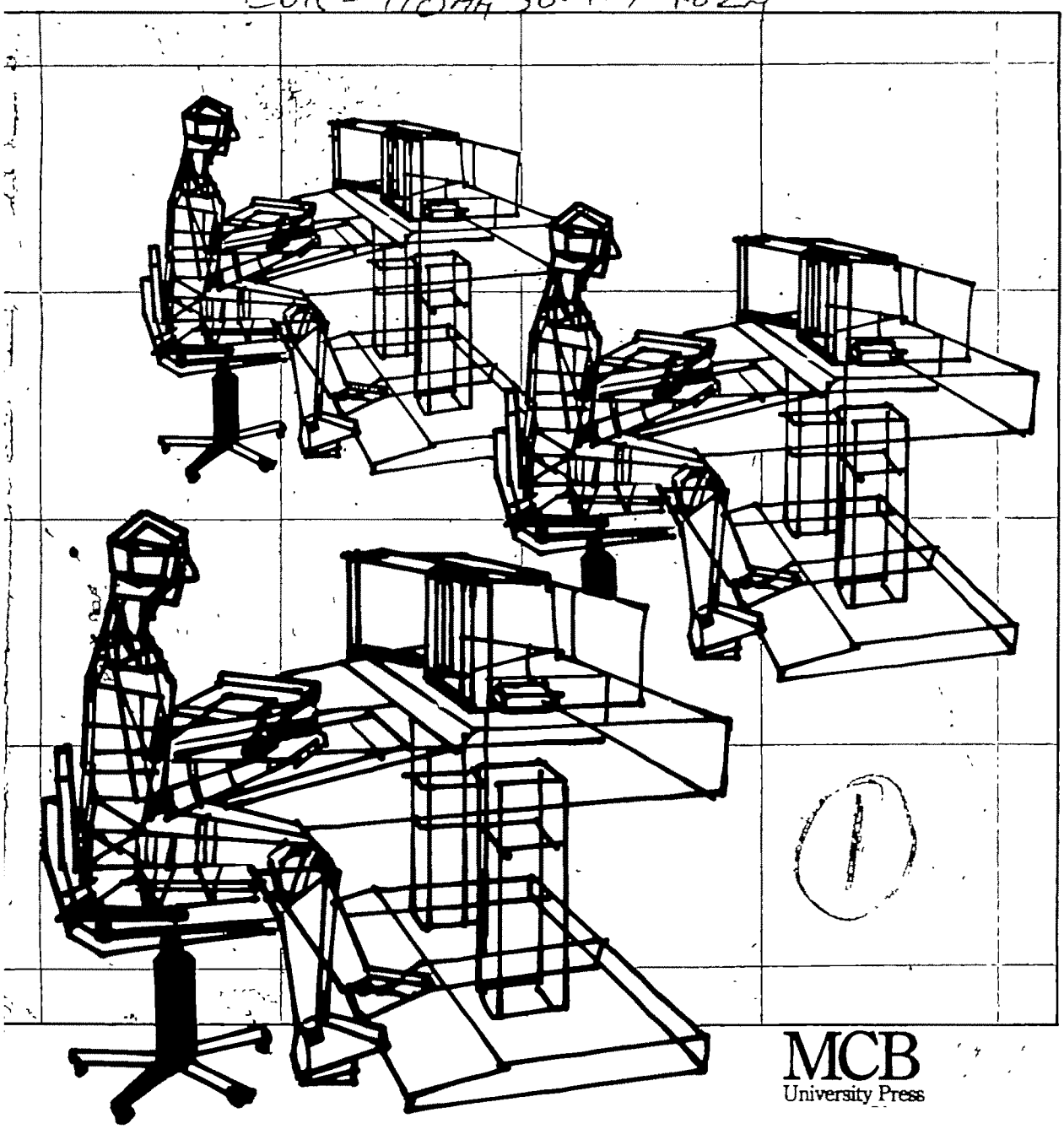
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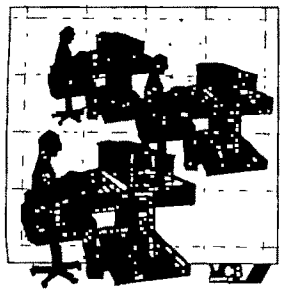
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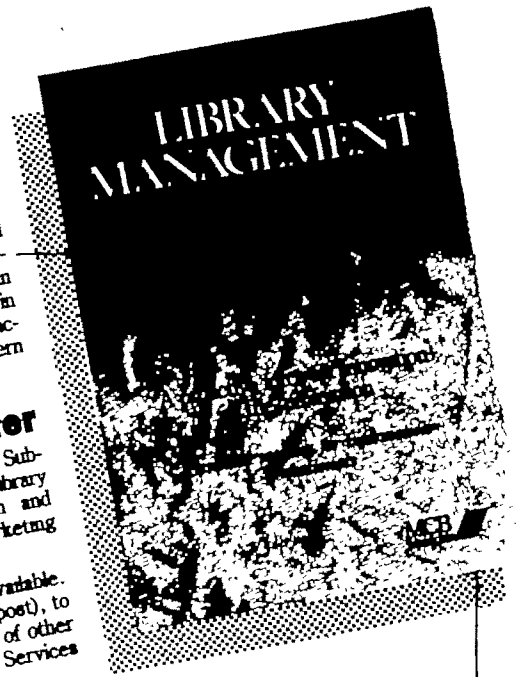
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Some Suggestions on Acquiring Skills in Teaching Business

by Ronald R. Sims and John G. Veres

Business Schools, Management Teachers, Teaching Methods

Some conceptions of what constitutes good teaching are listed and grouped in three categories: systematic-research, philosophy-theory, and art-craft. Teaching styles and specific skills or behaviours are discussed within these categories and in the context of the literature. This framework is seen as a useful way of relating business and teaching experience to teachers' needs and of providing developmental stages for teacher growth.

Exploring the Potential for Problem-Based Learning in Syndicate

by Richard Teare and Gary Akehurst

Learning, Simulation, Simulation Models

The business environment requires graduates who are adaptive and able to develop and implement appropriate solutions to business problems. The contention of this paper is that problem-based learning is an essential element of final year undergraduate studies in applied business subjects. Examples of syndicate based collaborative projects with national and regional companies are used to illustrate the potential utility of this approach.

Getting Up to Speed: Establishing an Innovative MBA Foundation Course

by Theodore T. Herbert and Martin Schatz

Business Schools, Evaluation, Teaching Methods

Entering full-time MBA students have often not developed the foundation skills that will facilitate their entry into MBA studies; indeed, students with non-business backgrounds face the need to acquire the basic concepts of business with which to attack their studies on an equal footing with those who have academic or practical experience in business. This article reports the development of an innovative academic programme used by a private Graduate School of Business to focus diverse resources on its entering full-time student class, to give them that consistent and relevant background deemed vital to their full integration in their programmes of study. Subjective evaluations of the programme are reported, with implications for transference to other MBA programmes, or to undergraduate programmes in business.

Marketing and Languages: An Integrative Model

by Ian McCall

Business Schools, Languages, Marketing Education

Traditional courses associating languages with business studies have not emphasised the ways in which learning a language must be based on how it is used in and reflects its society. A framework is proposed for an integrated course in which knowledge of a language is consciously related to the processes of interpersonal communication and the cultural aspects of marketing and negotiation.

Adaptable Facilities: An Improved Environment for Business and Office Studies in Further Education

by Sue Taylor

Equipment, Information Systems, Office Automation, Training

Problems to be overcome in making the transition from the traditional classroom to a learning environment more closely

matched to the conditions of the real office include provision for a different mix of activities, greater variety of space types and sizes, multi-function spaces and flexible planning for growth with respect to furniture and services. Guidelines are given for staged development of such facilities.

Emerging Issues in the Growth of Non-College Education and Training Programmes

by Robert C. Haring and John L. Tarver

Education, Industrial Training, Training, Universities, USA

The purposes of this article are to (1) explore typical non-college courses and programmes, which may be recommended for formal college credit and indirectly address a vast market potential for university involvement in industry and government educational pursuits, (2) indicate the nature of non-campus business courses and programmes for comparison, (3) explore a number of critical issues in credit review, and (4) indicate some of the options and opportunities.

The "New MBA" — What It Means for Managers

by John Peters

Education, Training, Management Development

An overview of the MBA is given, followed by an account of the new-style MBA: what it offers, its advantages and the cost. Two new MBA programmes are assessed and compared.

Evaluating an Interpersonal Skills Training Programme

by David W.G. Hind

Training, Interpersonal Skills, Questionnaires

Interpersonal skills training is shown to be of value for all students of Business Studies and Marketing. This article evaluates the implementation of a previously published design for a four-stage programme of interpersonal skills training by the administration of pre- and post-training questionnaires. The findings show that awareness of the need for, knowledge and understanding of, and framework for assessing and modifying such skills were developed in the trained students.

Skill Development on Business Studies Programmes

by Elizabeth M. Wilson, Margaret A. Reid and Linda Sinclair

Business Schools, Education, Skills

A logical and coherent framework has been developed to help in the teaching of skills. The approach involved drawing up an inventory of skills required by employers, and the compiling of a skills map. Information was then obtained from former BTEC, HND Business Studies students and management practitioners. This was supplemented by data from the literature on basic business skills.

Some Suggestions on Acquiring Skills in Teaching Business

by

Ronald R. Sims and John G. Veres

College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, VA and Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, AL, USA

There are some teaching skills that most of us would agree that all business teachers ought to possess. All business teachers, for example, ought to be able to structure knowledge in a way that promotes understanding, and they ought to be able to manage groups of learners. However, beyond a few obvious skills such as these, identifying universal business teaching skills is a difficult task, because identification of required teaching skills emerges from one's conception of what constitutes good teaching. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the authors' conceptions of good business teaching and teaching skills, and to propose how these skills might be treated in the education of business teachers.

Six Conceptions of Good Teaching

There are many ways good teaching can be conceptualised. Some of these conceptions are:

(1) operationalising learning principles;
(2) following a tested model;
(3) doing what effective teachers do;
(4) implementing a philosophical model;
(5) implementing a theoretical model;
(6) performing in creative, resourceful ways.

The first three conceptions, as can be seen in Figure 1, are systematic and all have been derived from research. The first conception, operationalising learning principles, results from translated laboratory research. Good teaching from this perspective is based on learning principles such as transfer, memory, retention, reinforcement and motivation and the appropriate use of them in the classroom. Hunter's mastery teaching (1982) is a noteworthy example of this notion of good teaching. Her seven-step model has been informally evaluated by teachers, but its main source of justification is its relationship to learning principles.

Following a tested model of good teaching, the second conception comes from experimental research. In this type of research, a view of good teaching is developed through logical reasoning and previous research; good teaching is defined in terms of specific teaching acts, and then it is evaluated. The evaluation phase consists

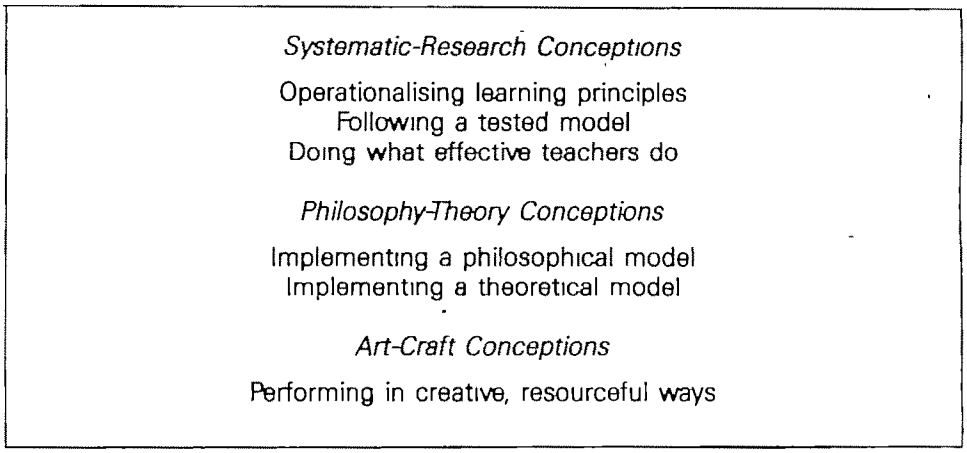


Figure 1.
Conceptions of Good Teaching

of training teachers in its use, controlling confounding variables, employing the model for a specified period of time, and pre- and post-testing students.

If the specific teaching acts promote student learning as the model suggests, a conception of good teaching will have been identified and initially verified. An example of good teaching that has been tested in this way is Bloom's mastery of learning[1]. Bloom's mastery of learning prescriptions emerge from a model which consists of student cognitive and affective entry characteristics, instructional behaviours derived from learning research, and several types of learning outcomes.

The third conception, doing what effective teachers do, comes from process-product, correlational research conducted by Stallings and Kaskowitz[2], Brophy and Everston[3], Fisher *et al.*[4], Coker *et al.*[5], and others. In this research, effective teachers are identified on the basis of some criterion (such as standardised achievement test scores of their students), and their teaching is examined to determine the behaviours they use and do not use. The behaviours of the teachers who have high-achieving students become the definition of what good teaching is. This technique resulted in the set of procedures that Rosenshine [6] has labelled "direct instruction."

The next two conceptions are philosophy-theory conceptions. Their foundation is not based on what works. Rather, their foundation is based on what ought to work or what is morally right. The fourth conception, following a philosophical model of good teaching, comes from inquiry into the nature of persons and knowledge. In this perspective, acceptable and moral ways of interacting with people and knowledge are identified. These ways are then translated into classroom practices. Teachers who use the practices are considered good teachers because the practices are consistent with a philosophical position. Experiential learning and open education are examples of this view of good teaching[7]. The bases of open education are that learners are self-directed, responsible decision makers and that the chief function of knowledge is to aid problem solving.

Implementing a theoretical model of good teaching, the fifth conception is the same as following a tested model of good teaching, except that a model has been formally tested. A model of good teaching is developed through logic, synthesis

of research, or insight. The model consists of specification of the elements of good teaching, description of the relationship of the elements, and identification of resultant classroom actions. To the extent that a teacher is able to implement the model, he or she is considered a good teacher. Evidence of the impact of teaching on students is not emphasised in judging the efficacy of this model. Examples of good teaching from this perspective include team teaching, discovery learning, and the use of behavioural objectives.

The last conception of good teaching, performing in creative, resourceful ways, is an art-craft conception. The essence of this view of good teaching is invention and personalisation. A good teacher is a person who assesses the needs and possibilities of a situation and creates and uses practices that have promise for that situation. Teaching is a reflective, individualistic activity from this point of view. Current proponents of this conception include Wolfe[8], Eisner[9], Tom[10] and Rubin[11].

To some extent these conceptions of teaching are arbitrary frameworks, as are other conceptions of teaching such as those of Nuthall and Snook[12] or Joyce and Weil[13]. For example, operationalising learning principles could be viewed as a type of untested theoretical model of teaching. However, it was formulated as a separate conception and placed in the systematic-research group because of its close adherence to research findings. Also, many theoretical models draw on learning research, but often the models draw on logic and other elements as well. The six conceptions and the three major categories into which they are placed should be viewed as convenient heuristics for examining teaching skills rather than as fixed domains.

Emerging Teaching Skills

Many of the teaching skills that are emphasised in these conceptions of good teaching differ significantly even though, as mentioned earlier, there are some classroom skills which ought to be present in all teaching. The major teaching skills from systematic-research conceptions are specific, detailed classroom acts. The specific acts associated with direct instruction as identified by Rosenshine [6] include clear goals, teacher-directed activities, narrow questions, immediate reinforcement, and monitoring of performance. Hunter's[14] specific acts of mastery teaching are anticipatory set, objectives, instructional input, modelling, checking for understanding, guided practice, and independent practice. These lists of specific teaching skills are highly compatible. Together, the lists indicate that the skills of teaching consist of the teacher's getting students ready to learn, presenting information to be learned, checking students' understanding through questioning, providing practice with close monitoring, and reviewing at regular intervals. According to the systematic-research perspective, teachers who employ these specific behaviours will facilitate students' learning.

Teaching skills from philosophy-theory conceptions may include many of the behaviours that classroom research has revealed, but the emphasis is different. Rather than isolated acts, the major skills are those associated with interpretation. The teacher's job is to come to understand the philosophical or theoretical model and to employ a consistent, compatible set of behaviours suggested or inferred

from the model. Some models are more specific than others in terms of classroom acts, but all usually require some measure of elucidation or deduction. A philosophical model such as open education requires a great deal of interpretation to arrive at specific, interactive teacher behaviours. A theory-based model could provide guidelines for questioning, reacting and clarifying. It would require only minimal interpretation related to presenting the discrepant event, pacing, grouping and other matters. From the philosophy-theory perspective, teachers who employ the behaviours that the model contains, whatever they are, will benefit their students in the direction the model specifies.

From the art-craft conception of good teaching the major skills of teaching are assessment, reflection, and application or invention. Teachers need to be able to analyse a teaching-learning situation to ascertain its characteristics. On the basis of this analysis, the teacher then identifies and uses particular behaviours for particular purposes. These behaviours are either personal routines in which the teacher is especially proficient or they are novel acts created from the situation that exists.

Tom[10] sees teaching as a craft that consists of mechanical skills, analytic knowledge, and application ability; and, in addition, teaching has moral characteristics. Eisner[9] talks about these skills in a slightly different way. He calls the assessment-reflection stage connoisseurship. Behaviours that teachers retrieve from past experiences are the craft of teaching. Behaviours that the teachers create are the art of teaching. Good teaching from the art-craft perspective is doing whatever needs to be done. It is taken as an article of faith that teachers are capable of finding and using appropriate acts for the situations that arise.

Perhaps an analogy will help to clarify the differences in teaching skills among these three types of conceptions of good teaching. If teaching were acquiring clothing, then the systematic-research person probably would select a ready-made suit from a department store rack and wear it. The philosophy-theory person would purchase an appealing pattern, carefully follow the pattern after clarifying all directions to make his or her own suit, and then wear the suit. The art-craft person would avoid both the rack and the pattern. He or she would be a couturier who would evaluate the dominant features of his or her body and the situations in which the suit would be worn. Then he or she would design an original creation, prepare the material, sew it together, and then wear it, perhaps for only one occasion. In clothing procurement and in teaching, systematic-research provides ready-made specific solutions, philosophy-theory provides ready-made general solutions, and art-craft provides custom- and self-made solutions. Reflection, decision making, and independent action increase as one moves from systematic-research, through philosophy-theory, to art-craft.

In summary, the main teaching skills of systematic-research as currently revealed by the existent literature are applying the specific acts of presenting, checking and questioning; the main teaching skills of philosophy-theory are interpretation and consistent application of the revealed acts; and the main teaching skills of art-craft are observation, reflection, and identification and use of appropriate acts. This is not to say that these skills do not overlap or that the three types of skills are totally discrete sets. Certainly some interpretation is required by systematic-

research, some philosophy-theory prescribes quite specific acts, and research-produced behaviour can be useful to art-craft. Each type of conception represents a set of behaviours that are strongly, but not exclusively, associated with that conception.

Educating Business Teachers

If we accept that teaching skills are not independent conceptions of good teaching and that there are multiple sets of skills, a problem arises: what teaching skills ought business teachers to acquire? Three positions that can be taken in regard to this problem are:

(1) teach all of the skills, but permit each business teacher to select the conception and skills that he or she prefers;
(2) teach all of the skills and assist all business teachers to be proficient in all of them; or
(3) teach all of the skills, but teach sequentially over the early career of the business teacher.

The first position is based on the proposition that the three types of conceptions represent philosophical viewpoints. They are equally valid notions of teaching but they are incompatible. Business teachers cannot embrace all three positions because the positions are based on contrasting views of reality. Some business teachers will prefer one conception and its skills because the conception is consistent with the teachers' values and beliefs about education. Other teachers with different convictions will prefer other conceptions. Rather than requiring business teachers to learn and accept all of the skills or requiring business teachers to accept a single set of skills, the first position suggests that teachers will be more successful if they are made familiar with all conceptions and skills but are permitted to choose those that fit them. This position may be appropriate for the experienced business teacher who knows the reality of business schools and teaching and has reflected on it, but it seems to be inappropriate for the uninitiated novice. Most new business teachers may not yet have discovered their educational values and beliefs, especially if they have no previous business or real work experience.

The second position is probably appropriate for neither the novice nor the experienced business teacher. This position is based on the proposition that the three conceptions represent sets of neutral techniques, all useful depending on one's setting. From this perspective, the ideal organisational behaviour teacher is the teacher who possesses an extensive repertoire of skills. Business teachers who possess only a few skills are deficient. The business teacher becomes a kind of contingency theorist, applying whatever portion of the relevant theory which seems to be called for by a given situation. This position is inappropriate because it is unachievable. All business teachers cannot acquire proficiency in all of the skills. Some business teachers will be more able lecturers, some more able diagnosticians, some more able implementers of models, and some more able creators of practice. Only a rare teacher will use all skills with adeptness.

The third position is based on the proposition that the three types of conceptions and their skills represent a hierarchy, the first level being systematic-research skills, and the third level being art-craft skills. From this perspective the mature, consummate business teacher is the teacher who has reached the level of the artist-craftsperson. Implicit in this proposition is the understanding that the hierarchy of skills should be taught hierarchically.

This third position has promise, but the acquiring of the skills must be related to developmental states of teachers analogous to Fuller's[15] stages of teacher concerns or Wolfe's[8] stages of learning in the development of applied behavioural scientists. Certainly uninitiated or beginning business teachers should not be burdened with the total hierarchy of skills. The practical, specific skills of systematic-research that will help them be successful business teachers might be most appropriate for these novices. Thorough understanding and skilful application of getting students ready to learn, presenting information to be learned and reviewing at regular intervals may well be an appropriate goal at this level.

For business teachers with some experience who are beginning to understand the reality of the classroom, perhaps philosophy-theory skills should be stressed. At this stage, examination of philosophical positions and various teaching theories should receive emphasis. When business teachers realise that they can survive in the classroom and that they can actually teach and manage learners, they are ready for concentration on art-craft skills. They have achieved a level of security that permits them to stand back and think about what they have been doing and in which direction they may wish to move. Here reflection and active experimentation should be fostered.

Conclusions

How, then, can we portray these differing skills in a manner which may benefit educators of business teachers? The authors would propose a hierarchical structure of business teaching skills. This hierarchical relationship of the three sets of skills discussed above is illustrated in Figure 2. At each level of teacher development, a different set of skills is emphasised, but the other skills are not totally ignored. Further, some teachers will, of course, be ready for extensive treatment of art-craft skills as novices while other teachers, with many years of teaching experience, will require lengthy development of systematic-research skills.

It may be inferred from analyses by Gage[16], Hunter[14] and others, that in addition to meeting the needs of teachers at various stages of their development, this hierarchical view of teaching skills may have another benefit. Neither Gage nor Hunter discuss philosophy-theory, but each sees systematic-research as a necessary prerequisite to art-craft. Hunter believes that science provides principles or basic skills of teaching. Art, she says, is the synthesis and embellishment of the basic skills. Gage's position is that science has not produced a set of laws that make predictability and control in the real world of teaching possible. Science has produced useful relationships which teachers can adapt in response to changes in objectives, students, tasks and other variables. This adapting of the products of science is the art of teaching, according to Gage.

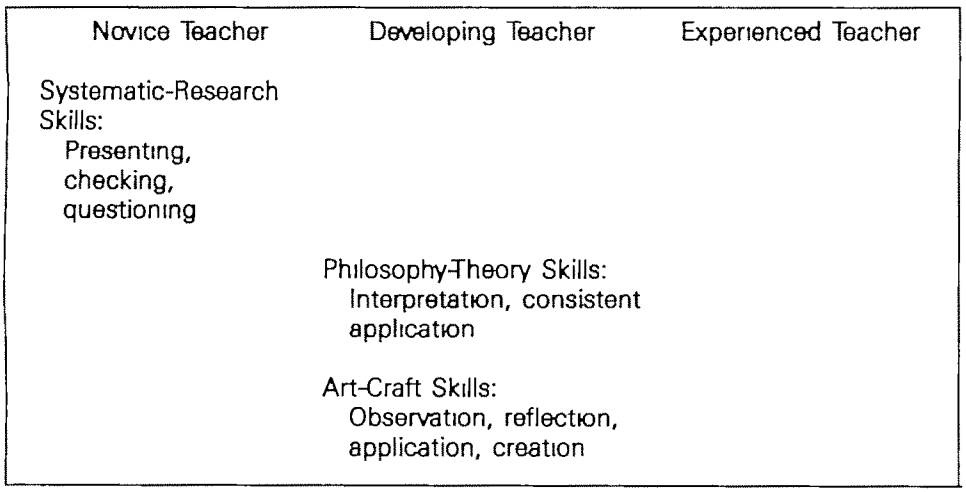


Figure 2. Developmental Perspective to Teaching Skills

The goal of the education of business teachers must be to help teachers become increasingly more skilful and thoughtful in their work. If teacher training is seen as a long-term endeavour and systematic research skills are emphasised early in the teacher-development process and philosophy-theory and art-craft skills are emphasised later, this goal may become more of a reality.

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Exploring the Potential for Problem-Based Learning in Syndicates

by
Richard Teare and Gary Akehurst
Dorset Institute of Higher Education

The logical focus for final-year undergraduate studies in applied business subjects is problem-based learning. Business simulations offer good potential for developing managerial skills during this transition period between education and industry. Yet this orientation can be difficult to manage and integrate with other curricular activities. The group or syndicate exercise offers perhaps the most flexibility and potential for management development because it can be used to examine particular business problems in a participative, non-directive way.

Achieving the desired balance between learning exercises which are authentic to student entry level business situations and those which are more appropriate to later career stages may require some experimentation. It is also necessary to devise learning objectives and consider the possible outcomes for the established situation mix. In order to explore the potential for problem-based learning in syndicates it is helpful to consider some of the outcomes of this approach. Illustrations are drawn from the experiences of others and personal reflections on industrially funded project work undertaken in syndicates by final year undergraduates.

The Concept of Problem-Based Learning

The ability to think effectively and creatively about problems is particularly important to managers working in an environment characterised by rapid change and innovation. Birch[1] argues that when problem-based learning is used as a structured method of enquiry, it can have a beneficial long-term effect on the pursuit of intellectual skills and knowledge:

> Problem-based learning requires students constantly to put their knowledge to work. It provides, thereby, the means of integrating knowledge around key theoretical and practical issues; in so doing it ensures that a true understanding is achieved. The intellectual rigour acquired in such problem-based learning is likely to be substantially greater than that associated with less structured and less focused approaches to undergraduate study.

The implication is that carefully defined business problems, which can be unravelled and solved by recourse to appropriate techniques, will have a progressive and positive effect on the student's level of confidence and motivation. Business

problems are thereby more likely to be viewed as an intellectual challenge than a personal threat.

According to Lewis[2] the success of problem-based learning in groups may depend on the willingness of members to accept delegated responsibility for aspects of the curriculum. This also implies acceptance of the need to work without close supervision and direction. The participative and co-operative nature of problem-based learning in groups additionally provides experience of role negotiation. Learning when to listen, when to be assertive or passive are integral to personal development, and vital to managerial effectiveness.

Management Development

Problem-based learning has traditionally been associated with postgraduate or post-experience business education, and is particularly relevant to the functional basis of course units concerned with business policy and aspects of strategic management[3, 4]. Wagstaff suggests the reason for this:

> An underlying assumption about such courses seems to be that course members are likely to move, either immediately upon completion of their programme or at sometime in the near future, into senior management positions where they will be involved in making the types of strategic decisions which are the focus of such a course.

Wagstaff reasons that this assumption may also apply to comparable undergraduate course units. There are however, several distinctions which must be recognised. The more limited industrial and managerial experience of undergraduates would suggest that problem-based learning requires a supportive programme of more theoretical study. Such a programe should focus on the principles and techniques which are most applicable to the formative stage of the student's career.

In business sectors where career progression for undergraduates is rapid, problem-based learning may have a critical role. The manager requires more than technical expertise. The effective manipulation of business information requires analytical skills, confidence and judgement. Of necessity the manager must also possess an array of interpersonal skills which develop from an experiential base. In this respect, problem-based learning in syndicates can be particularly beneficial.

Syndicate-Based Learning

Reviewing the educational benefits of syndicate based learning, Collier[5] refers to a "syndicate" as:

> ... classes of college students divided into groups of up to ten members and assigned exercises to be carried out on a co-operative basis by the syndicates acting as teams; the syndicates are working in some degree of independence and the members are on an equal footing.

Reported findings include increased student involvement in academic study, characterised by better attendance and greater expenditure of time on the work away from formal classes, greater course satisfaction, wider subject reading, a strong desire to complete the tasks undertaken and to subsequently pursue related study. Collier also found that this positive attitude to the subject matter was accompanied by increased co-operation and willingness to listen between syndicate members, and a stronger sense of mutual obligation. There are also indications

of improved performance in higher-order intellectual skills, especially relating to the interpretation and extrapolation of data, the application of learned principles in new situations and the synthesis of diverse material to form a coherent whole. The unitary sense of purpose created by syndicate based learning has also been found to increase individual levels of intellectual stimulation.

It is possible to conclude that the potential for personal development, and the level of group involvement in problem resolution will be influenced by student perceptions of the learning material. In essence this means that realism and relevance to career intentions are especially important. To substantiate this viewpoint, it is necessary to consider some of the practical issues surrounding the use of simulations in business education.

Simulating Business Problems

The established use of published case-study material in business education indicates wide acceptance of the "case method". Rendell[6] summarises the main functions:

> A case study uses a simulated situation, real or imaginary as a basis for the learning process, with particular emphasis on the development of the skills required in problem identification, data analysis and decision making.

Written cases can be used to illustrate or derive business principles, and can be sequenced by teaching objectives, by complexity of material or by the industries, sectors and businesses they represent[7]. Although case studies can provide an effective resource, they also have a number of limitations. Even when they are used, for example, in competitive situations, it is difficult to simulate the emotional pressures which would be experienced in real life.

Realistic Problem-Based Syndicate Projects

The effective use of problem-based learning in syndicates is illustrated by Fawcett *et al.*[8, 9, 10] who have used a non-directive group project to facilitate multidisciplinary subject integration during final-year undergraduate studies in catering administration. Their experiences indicate that with careful planning and appropriate encouragement and counselling, students will derive increased confidence and wisdom from the processes of negotiating with others and decision making.

The personal reflections which follow also relate to group project work undertaken by catering degree students as an integral part of the final-year programme of studies. During the last three years successive cohorts have undertaken a total of five collaborative projects with regional and national companies. In each case the students were given a project brief, a budget and a strict completion deadline. The syndicate groups were later required to present their findings to an invited panel of industrialists. The examples have been selected to illustrate the scope for using realistic problem-based learning exercises.

Viability of a Proposed Joint Venture

This exercise was to assess the viability of a proposed joint venture between Trusthouse Forte Ltd and British Rail with reference to passenger-train catering, and required students to evaluate the strategic implications, and forecast the market

potential using two main lines in the Southern region as the basis for a pilot investigation. The syndicate groups were provided with an information pack which included company history and other profile information; published accounts; details of the budget allocation and expenditure guidelines; and details of information gathering trips which had been arranged with British Rail. The syndicate reports were presented to an audience of students and a panel of eight assessors from four national companies.

This project took place during a period of press speculation concerning the future provision of passenger-train catering. The students were therefore required to approach the brief with sensitivity. The task of assessing the existing operations and future options was accomplished with considerable ingenuity and skill within one academic term, largely in extracurricular time. The work was treated so seriously that intense secrecy surrounded the development of rival proposals derived from each group's research activities. Although a competitive atmosphere was sustained between groups, the internal cohesion of each syndicate was remarkable. The unity of purpose engendered by the size of the task and the level of commitment necessary to complete the work on time, seemed to counteract the natural inclination of some syndicate members to dominate or opt out of the proceedings.

Consumer Preferences for Bournemouth Hotels

The membership of a marketing consortium required the compilation and computer-based analysis of a nationally distributed questionnaire to establish consumer preferences. Syndicate groups also undertook a regional tourism analysis and conducted qualitative market research in six member hotels. The collated research findings were formally presented by the students to a gathering of the consortium's hotel general managers.

In contrast to the proposed joint-venture project, the nature of this work required co-operation and collaboration both within and between syndicate groups at every stage. Part of the market research work involved the coding, analysis and interpretation of several thousand returned questionnaires using the SPSS-X statistical package. It was therefore necessary for representatives from each syndicate group to learn how to use the software, and to determine how to interpret and present the survey results. Several of the hotel general managers assigned to work with the syndicate groups were sufficiently impressed by the quality of work to invite an assessment of operational aspects beyond the scope of the project brief. In one instance students stayed overnight to assess the hotel's features and facilities from a consumer perspective. The close liaison with the consortium's marketing team and hotel general managers was an important contributory success factor. The tendency of syndicates to act in isolation was prevented by the commercial reality of the project, and the collaborative nature of the tasks it contained.

Business Plan for an Inflight Catering Unit

The plan for the catering unit, which was to be opened at a specified UK airport, required extensive collaboration with the sponsors, Trusthouse Forte Inflight

Services who undertook the project briefing and provided background information on the company's operations; the unit and local area information; unit financial information; sample unit equipment lists; vehicle information; shuttle and charter flight schedules; projected passenger forecasts; meal loadings/aircraft types; sample crew and flight meal specifications; sample stores and equipment lists and sample aircraft galley plans. The syndicate groups were allocated eight weeks to research and prepare a report detailing their proposals for the commissioning programme and business development. Boardroom-style presentations were made to a panel of company directors and general managers.

This project had a detailed and specific brief, which included a one-day introduction to operational aspects at a comparable inflight catering unit. The complex technical detail meant that syndicate groups had to compromise between trading and retaining the confidentiality of information. The brief issued by the sponsoring company was also designed with their management-development programme in mind, and assumed a certain degree of specialist knowledge. In this situation the syndicates overcame the problem by becoming mutually supportive. They recognised the need to share general insights and background industrial experience whilst retaining their own stylised response to the brief. Mutual support was also necessary to attain sufficient operational and financial understanding to sustain the debate with the assessment panel members, who were able to question the feasibility of every aspect of their proposals.

Conclusion

Problem-based learning in syndicates provides an effective and versatile way of developing and integrating skills and applied business subjects. These considerations are particularly relevant and helpful to the period of transition and adjustment that students must make at the beginning of their career. Collaborative projects are especially useful in this respect because they facilitate the simulation of commercial decision processes and conditions more realistically. Experience suggests that they can also be used to create cohesion within groups, and competition or co-operation between groups.

There are other benefits which accrue from collaborative work. The attraction of working on behalf of potential employers in an educational context promotes commitment and professionalism. Students gain a deeper understanding of organisational issues, and can use this experience during subsequent career interviews. Employers often obtain fresh insights on long-term problems, and they have the opportunity to open informal discussions about available career opportunities. Business education must offer the prospect of skills acquisition, development and application. Problem-based learning in syndicates offers the potential to sustain each of these requirements in the most realistic way possible.

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Getting Up to Speed: Establishing an Innovative MBA Foundation Course

by
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Many two-year MBA programmes draw substantial numbers of students who do not possess undergraduate degrees in business; in particular, these programmes may encounter some difficulty in ensuring that each entering student is well-equipped with an appropriate overview of business and management, and with the requisite skills with which to perform effectively both in the MBA programmes and in his or her career.

This has been a concern at the reporting institution, an AACSB-accredited Graduate School of Business in a relatively small private college located in the Southern United States. The Graduate School of Business was recently given a high ranking among accredited MBA programmes in the USA, as well as being ranked among the top ten MBA programmes in the Southern States.

The purpose of this report is to share our experience of developing a programme of preparation for entering full-time MBA students through an integrated foundation exposure to basic skills and perspectives in a week-long intensive course.

The faculty and administration in MBA programmes may share the belief that preparation prior to starting formal classwork can enhance the students' success in coping with the academic programme; such preparation may consist of foundation skills and orientations that underlie such content courses as Economics, Marketing, Management and Finance. MBA faculty often assert that MBA coursework is different from undergraduate work in business, in sophistication and in perspective, as well as in the nature of managerial decision quality.

Yet students entering the MBA programme are faced with the difficult task of learning at several levels at once: the obvious task is to absorb and deal effectively with the content of a course; the less-obvious parallel task is that of developing process skills such as computer facility, case analysis and classroom contribution. Another less obvious task for the student is that of developing social integration and support systems with their peers for effective learning opportunities outside the classroom. And, finally, they must gain insight into the way in which the MBA instructional system and the core methodologies that characterise the institution

are intended to function — the rules of the game. The full impact of all this can be considerable — and even frightening for the entering MBA student.

A subsidiary question of how to integrate students with non-business backgrounds into the business discipline is an active source of inquiry, often resolved through discipline-related coursework in foundation courses. Yet, in many programmes, coursework is waived for students who, perhaps in undergraduate business programmes have had what are deemed to be courses equivalent in content to introductory MBA-level courses. This practice seems reasonable, yet may result in other positive benefits being foregone. One of these lost opportunities is the building of a strong network of interpersonal support and group development; another is the capability of standardising the perspective and skills considered uniquely important to the specific programme.

The Institution

The Graduate School of Business draws students from diverse educational backgrounds and disciplines, as well as from widely scattered geographic locations. The last (1986) entering MBA class came from nine different foreign countries and 23 states; about two-thirds of these 51 students had undergraduate backgrounds in non-business subjects, such as oceanography and foreign languages.

Admission to the full-time MBA-programmes is very competitive and restricted to about 50 students enrolling in the Fall term. The programme itself is a lock-step programme during the first year. The required courses taken in the first term are Financial Accounting, Organisational Behaviour, Issues in Economics, and Quantitative Methods. The required second-term courses are Managerial Accounting, Marketing Management, Financial Management and Operations Management.

The Graduate School of Business operates under the pedagogical philosophy of the case method, as opposed to lecture-discussion methods of a conceptual or theoretical bent. The mission of the Graduate School of Business is to prepare its students for general management, developing an administrative point of view. The goal is to have students gain competence in each of five identifiable areas of knowledge and skill:

Administrative skills
Analytical skills
Corporate and environmental culture
Technical knowledge
Leadership ability.

The underlying educational and curricular philosophy has led to a programme environment in which students develop continuing and ongoing facility with:

- computer analytic methods;
- computer-based communication skills (report writing, presentation ancillaries) and personal communication skills;
- competence in analysis and implementation via the case method;

- an internalised perspective and sensitivity to corporate social responsibility, international business, and fundamental business and management functions;
- interpersonal and group management skills.

For successful completion of the programme, as well as for enhancing the classroom experience, it is intended that students be in the position of building on their skills, rather than using valuable class time to gain foundation expertise at the expense of developing higher levels of insights into their applications.

The MBA Preparatory Programme

The integrated preparatory programme for entering MBA students consists of a full and intensive week of preparation in various subjects and skills deemed essential for immediate and high-level performance during the first year (indeed, the first term as well as all subsequent terms) of the MBA programme. It is conducted on campus just prior to the beginning of Fall classes. The students are divided into study groups from the beginning, each group having roughly equal proportions by gender, undergraduate major, geographical origin, and so on; the study groups are established explicitly in order to furnish a social "safety net", as well as to facilitate the learning process.

The areas of content and skill, and the number of contact hours devoted to each, are shown in Table I.

Topic	Contact Hours
Orientation to the Graduate School of Business	¾ hour
Student leaders' presentation on the first-year MBA experience	2 hours
Introduction to Business Functions	3 × ¼ hours
Business in Modern Society	2 × ¾ hours
Case Analysis Methods	4 hours
Social Responsibility and Ethics	4 hours
International Aspects of Business	3 × ½ hours
Computer Fundamentals	15 × ½ hours
IFPS (Interactive Financial Planning System)	4 hours
Experiential Interpersonal Exercise	1 × ¼ hour
Personal Finance	¾ hour
Screening and discussion of "In Search of Excellence"	2 hours
Final Exam	1 × ½ hour

Table I.
Programme Content

Operational Aspects

Attendance is mandatory, one unit of credit is given, and a graded final exam is given. The programme is staffed by the full-time Graduate Faculty.

Each subject/skill area is offered in an integrated fashion, co-ordinating content with each of the others in order to minimise redundancy and to build toward a single and mutually-supportive week of intensive effort. A single complex case is used as a running theme throughout the week, with various discipline- or skill-specific aspects highlighted according to the schedule. In this way, the students

may see the inter-relationships of diverse business disciplinary approaches and content, as well as the utility of analytic techniques. For other applications, specially prepared materials such as problems and cases are used. A detailed schedule for the programme is available upon request.

Further reinforcement and disciplinary extensions of the one-week programme are provided by half-day sessions during the regular term. These half-day sessions, in which attendance is also mandatory during each week of the first year, are in addition to the regular academic classes, and also carry the credit of one unit. While an extension of the Preparatory Programme, these sessions are not considered in this report.

Effectiveness and Benefits of the Preparatory Programme

Effectiveness measures are necessarily subjective and based on:

(1) the perceived capability of the students to enter regular classes at a level significantly higher on the learning curve than previously, and hence with faster exposure to and performance with course materials; and

(2) short-term feedback from the students who have undergone the process.

Separate and equally subjective factors are those of the quality of students' interpersonal relationships; lessening of anxiety due to the transition to a new experience (the MBA programme); facility with new tools and skills; the generating of a positive, supportive environment; the enhancement of creative and insightful management solutions and applications, hopefully to be reflected in their career performances and the extent to which their unique capabilities will be sought by major corporations. Since the programme reported has had a full year in its current format, and is in the planning phase for its second year, longer-term experience will be necessary for its full evaluation.

Preliminary effectiveness evidence is available, however, through feedback from students and from those professors whose classes the students have taken.

At the conclusion of the first Preparatory Programme, students were requested to evaluate the programme anonymously, using an open-ended format. Of the 51 participants, 22 took the opportunity to do so, often writing extensive comments. Taken as a whole, their evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. Representative comments are provided in Table II, both positive and negative.

Feedback was sought throughout the first term from those professors in whose classes these students were enrolled. They agreed that this entering class started the term at a much higher level of performance, preparation, and motivation than any other class — despite having even less business background than the previous classes. Other observations by faculty were that this class exhibited a much greater cohesiveness and level of social comfort with each other than experienced in past classes; certainly the intensity and quality of class participation reflects this.

At a different level, the faculty members involved agreed that the programme avoids redundancy of materials through careful co-ordination, the enhancing of effectiveness through the design and use of materials specifically developed for the programme, the identifying and addressing of the specific basic skills and insights deemed necessary to the programme, the designing of regular courses with the skill level of the class already known so that over-repetition is avoided, and the

Impressions of professors and facilities are *very* favourable As a first year attempt, though the work load and new concepts amount was immense, a good time was had by this one

I'm looking forward to this. I feel well prepared for the start of classes

I have enjoyed the orientation week and have also learned quite a bit

It is useful Because most of us have no background in business, if we can get a concept of what business is (and) what case analysis is before the regular classes begin, it will help us to get accustomed to the future courses

It was good and covered a lot of material But I felt I did not have enough time to reflect on the material covered I felt everything seemed too much squeezed into these 5½ days What I did find beneficial was the work pace which really got you going I wish we could have spent more time on the computer concepts

The orientation week as a whole was interesting, in giving us an overview of what to expect in the coming weeks.

Strong programme — makes you proud of yourself when done All in all great!

I have learned a lot in this past week and have enjoyed it despite the late hours However, as someone who didn't have an undergraduate degree in business or experience in case analysis, I still feel somewhat lost.

On the whole I enjoyed the orientation week I think it was a good introduction to the facilities and it was a definite plus to get to know one's classmates and some of the professors beforehand. All in all, I'd say the outcome was positive Good format. Thanks!!

Overall I am very happy with the programme.

Orientation week was especially helpful in getting everyone well acquainted. Orientation likewise provided a means to know the professors outside of a structured class situation. I must comment on how impressed I was with the professors I couldn't believe how helpful they were and how real I do, however, feel that the programme could be improved The hours of class time were too long.

I must say that you sure did keep me busy! I learned to be fairly proficient in two computer languages (with minimal prior exposure) I also became somewhat intimate with an American institution — Disney The class discussions were quite stimulating, and I'm looking forward to two more years of them Overall, I was very busy — and enjoyed most every minute of it It was intellectually stimulating, well-placed, not overly taxing, and fun

As a whole, I thought that orientation week was both fun and informative It was a good week of transition to not only get back into a schoolwork frame of mind, but also it gave me a chance to take a peek at business courses and to at least start to pick up on the lingo Everything was well laid out and not hectic I think the headstart on the computer with IFPS and Samna is something that cannot be emphasised enough Understanding how to use the tools of business is perhaps the single most important step to succeeding

Overall — positive feeling about programme Positive aspects A Evidence of faculty's perception of teaching more than just "job" B Managerial applications for quantitative skills learned C Nice idea to go to Epcot — practice what you've learned D Good base for beginning all classes Negative Aspects. A A lot to cover in short period of time B Maybe a little more guidance on what was expected on homework assignments

I think the orientation week in general went very well The days were long, but there was a lot of information and material to be covered It is hoped that this week will be a good foundation to enter the fall term It was nice to get to know the students and profs beforehand, so that the "first day of class" will not be so awkward

The eight hours (sometimes more) a day was a little much The "plus" was that spending all that time together led to a lot of interaction. I think I've met most of the students and quite a few of the faculty This makes me much more comfortable about beginning classes. While computer sessions seemed to cause a great deal of anxiety, I personally feel much more comfortable with the machines now On the whole, the orientation week was great! I enjoyed it immensely It was a first effort, I'm sure it will get even better over time

Table II.
Students' Evaluatory Comments

communicating of discipline content, approach and timing of concepts to others on the faculty.

Transferability of the Programme

The programme discussed here should be readily transferable to other schools. It could also be used, if desired or considered appropriate, at the undergraduate level, and with modification it could also be used in part-time programmes. We are, in fact, in the beginning phases of extending the concept to our part-time (evening) programme.

From a programmatic aspect, the keys to transferability are likely to be:

- the strength of the perceived need to reduce the variability and raise the overall level of the programme-specific skills of the entering students;
- the willingness of the faculty and administration to identify the necessary and common skills which underlie the programme and which are associated with success in the programme, and then to work together to formulate relatively discipline-free but tool-specific approaches for enhancing acquisition of those skills or tools;
- the extent to which those faculty involved in such a programme can develop and co-ordinate it in a co-operative, goal-directed fashion.

Our experience suggests that an interested, committed faculty and administration pave the way for a successful programme. Our experience also suggests that such a programme can contribute significantly to the overall quality of the educational experience of the students and the involvement of the faculty in improving both the pedagogy and the academic curriculum.

Erratum

Theodore T. Herbert and H. Deresky published an article, "Advances in Reseach in Executive Work and Behaviour: Challenges for Management Education", in *BE*, Vol. 7 No. 3, 1986. Theodore Herbert was mistakenly affiliated with Concordia University when in actual fact he had joined the Crummar Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida in 1985.

Marketing and Languages: An Integrative Model

by
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Languages and business studies, or one of the principal areas of study within business studies, have customarily been brought together in one of two ways. A model currently favoured in a number of institutions is that in which a degree course has an international student mix with reciprocal arrangements in other West European countries whereby students from each spend up to two years in the foreign institution taking classes in the language of the host country.

The second model is more widespread and diverse. It includes a combination of languages and general business studies or particular business functions which can take place at sub-degree, degree and postgraduate levels. These courses are usually perceived as having greater vocational relevance to the needs of the student. The point of departure for the new development of language courses aimed at communicating a real world, rests on a view of language as a social phenomenon and society as a complex structure. To provide an understanding of how such a society works and the relationships of language to it, the best insights are given by interdisciplinary perspectives which recognise the fact that language cannot be learnt separately from experience and understanding. Integrated language and area studies are instanced as the practical model and the theoretical basis for a form of language study which, in conceptual terms as well as at the vocational level, firmly challenges the traditional model. It is the intention here to provide a corresponding conceptual framework which integrates business studies with languages.

A favoured model for bringing together languages and business studies involves degree courses with an international mix of students. These students are exchanged between institutions in other countries spending up to two years taking part of their course in the language of the host country. These are, increasingly, common courses with common standards, usually with reciprocal arrangements for representation on the other institution's Board of Studies or equivalent. The students learn areas of their business studies in the host country language. That language is the vehicle for their learning; their social exchanges are largely played out in it and the students learn to communicate in a business sense through the interplay of their studies and their social life. Graduates are presumed to be effective in a business sense in the language of the host country and are likely to have developed a European ethos[1]. Such courses are "business studies-driven".

However, graduates have in no way been consciously prepared for interacting in other, often very different, countries and cultures which is frequently characteristic of the jobs they are required to do.

The second favoured model combines languages and business studies within an institution. Such courses may well be seen by some language departments as one way to maintain numbers in a pragmatic world in which traditional language courses are increasingly perceived as irrelevant. In a fair number of instances, marketing or overseas marketing has been seen as an appropriate concomitant. Sometimes the business register of the language is strongly featured and integration can vary from negligible to where language and the associated studies touch at a number of points, e.g. in market research interviews and sales/purchase interactions. It is often supported by a residential period, perhaps with company attachment and/or a project overseas, which are often intended as the acme of the integration process. In the majority of cases, however, language has a largely complementary role although there are some in which language predominates, perhaps at the expense of the business element. In neither of the models is there a conceptual basis for integration which would give direction to course development and at the same time provide a research focus for furthering the integration. A "language-driven" course, in the sense that it derives its initial impulse from language, could provide this much needed thrust.

Recent writings have highlighted the weaknesses of the "lang-lit" model in the study of languages. These have underlined some latter-day variations and have illustrated the breaking of this pattern[2]. It is claimed that the literary text requires the construction of an imagined world while the spoken language expresses a real world. This article seeks to provide a conceptual framework for integrating languages and business studies which recognises that the learning of a language is inseparable from experience and understanding of its use in its society. If the aim of such a course is the acquisition of advanced communication skills in international business contexts, then the course should be truly interdisciplinary in approach with language study at the centre as in language and area studies. This requires a strong philosophy to give a firm direction and emphasis to business inputs, and that philosophy has to be embedded in language itself. It calls for a knowledge of the business area with which it is to be integrated as well as an understanding of the language studies in the wider context of communication and behaviour.

Philosophy and Framework

The concept of negotiation is a useful place to start in seeking a point of contact upon which to build a language-centred framework for integration with business studies. Negotiation has been seen as a basic process of decision-making[3]. One authority has developed a paradigm which presents a framework for studying individuals, organisations and societies through the key role of negotiation[4] and it has been regarded as a significant economic activity[5]. Further views see organisations as bargaining and influence systems[6] and embrace politics and influence as central to the behaviour of individuals in organisations[7]. In business studies, prime subject candidates for consideration in terms of this negotiation

focus are industrial relations, purchasing, marketing and organisational behaviour. For present purposes, language integration will be confined to marketing, but the approach is equally applicable to other areas.

The development of the negotiation perspective has long been seen as appropriate to inter-organisational business encounters. The fully negotiated transaction has been identified as the prototype of all exchange transactions[8]. The nature of the marketing task leading to exchange transactions is seen as the starting point for looking at organisations and organisation theories and the politics of marketing decision-making and integration[9], underlining the relationship between what goes on inside organisations and between them. Given the added component of a foreign language, the negotiation view is extended to include interlingual and intercultural situations. If we add further the interaction approach to international marketing and purchasing of the IMP Group[10], the idea of markets as networks[11] and the conceptualisation of the implementation of marketing strategies in terms of agreements[12], we have a view of marketing in which face-to-face problem-solving is paramount.

Communication and language are at the heart of it. They are the means by which influence strategies and skills are given effect. They are also the means by which people in conflict situations or situations in which they wish to exert influence, disclose information consciously or unconsciously about their own intentions, preferences and social perceptions. They interact with other factors affecting negotiation outcomes to provide a model for a marketing programme which is integrated in its approach with language study as its focal point. These factors include the behavioural predispositions of the parties and the environmental and situational influences on them. All the factors interact with each other to make negotiators act in a particular way[13].

The manner in which negotiators act towards, and react to each other in face-to-face interaction will also affect outcomes. Tangible issues like how resources might be shared are affected by others arising from the relationship. For this reason negotiation outcomes are said to be interaction dependent. This dependence is thrown into greater relief if the model of dyadic interaction is considered. In this there is an interplay of factors external and internal to the individuals involved in the interaction. External influences show up in the relation between a person's actions and previous actions of the other, while internal influences can be seen in the relation between an act and previous actions by the same person[14].

While the model outlined is based on the negotiation concept, it subsumes other problem-solving communication processes not always as formalised or as extensive as negotiation. Language is central to all these processes. In the context of the present argument, negotiation is understood to include processes of influence and persuasion.

Language in Negotiation

To understand fully the potential and problems of language and influence in negotiation, it is first necessary to understand the process of negotiation itself. Negotiation skills models have been derived from available research in which stages have been identified, each of which requires specific behavioural and linguistic

skills[15, 16]. Additionally, facilitating stages have been identified in one model requiring different linguistic behaviours to overcome what empirical researchers have pinpointed as key problems in moving from one stage to another[17].

Language then is the expression of chosen negotiation behaviour as well as being an indicator of particular behaviours. Different kinds of language can be matched to the needs of the negotiation situation once these needs have been established. At different stages of negotiation different behaviours are necessary and language appropriate to them has to be used. The behaviour of effective negotiators has been isolated with its implications for language use. The interactive skills approach to problem-solving and negotiation provides interacting parties with a range of behaviours drawn from a breakdown of observable behaviour into its separate elements[18]. It claims to provide a repertoire wide enough to give genuine choice in deciding how best to behave in different situations. In particular, it identifies behaviours which are influential in shaping predictable reactions and these behaviours are reflected in the language used.

The reader will doubtless have noticed that language is now being used interchangeably with the foreign language. This is no coincidence. It has been shown that inside or between languages, human communication equals translation and that a study of translation is, therefore, a study of language[19]. Appropriate behavioural objectives for negotiation or any other problem-solving situations will be couched in language terms and, whatever the spoken language, it can be matched to the stage of negotiation and the language objectives for appropriate behaviour in a given interactive situation.

Whatever a negotiator's technical competence in the use of a language, whether his own or a foreign one, he will not be effective until he is able to bridge the gap between utterance and felt meaning. If a hearer understands, he has been influenced[20]. To achieve this, a number of parallel or multi-channel activities require to take place so that decoding of the intended message is facilitated. These activities include oral communication, non-verbal signs, the situation itself which can mediate verbal and non-verbal signs, the social context within which a communicative act takes place and the social structure which will affect the context and the situation. It is only if the negotiator shares the assumptions of his opposer that a meaningful dialogue can be established. Those assumptions embrace the cognitive structures of the opposers and the world view they hold. Language and culture are inextricably intertwined.

Effective negotiation in an intercultural context rests on an awareness of the process of negotiation in the first instance. In the second place it rests on an ability to understand and use a variety of behaviours identified as appropriate, arising from the participants' objectives for the interaction, and any revision of these resulting from issues raised within a stream of communication behaviours. In the third place it depends on an understanding of the culture in which the interaction is taking place since a sensitivity to culture will put focus on the social context and mediate suitably the influencing behaviours in that particular situation. Language is the servant of all these and each spoken language has implicit objectives stemming from them, supported by its own non-verbal gestures and expressions.

Some Possible Benefits

Syntheses for development such as the one presented here will only work if they are a response to needs. It has been clearly shown that the kinds of language graduates being produced in terms of the language studied, are not consonant with changing export patterns[21]. Very often employers seek graduates who are required to perform effectively in many markets. The argument being adduced here is that, although only one foreign language may be studied, the language focus as the means of fusing the relationship of communication and behaviour is a suitable preparation for multi-cultural business encounters. The intention should be to develop these inter-relationships with a view to the student internalising them whether for his selected language or any other language in his repertoire currently or in the future. Provided the internalisation results from a conscious study, the student should learn to communicate at the interpersonal level no matter the cultural context.

The framework drawn here could form the basis for experimentation and modification to allow languages and business studies to develop in much the same way as has happened with language and area studies. Further specific supportive research would enable a progressive build-up of knowledge and experience to take place. It provides an alternative model to the one in which part of a course takes place in a foreign institution with reciprocal arrangements in the home institution for foreign students. It addresses a wider reality than the latter which, as currently constituted, appears to aim at producing good European businessmen. It seeks, by the wider analysis of another society, to put our own into perspective, enabling us to overcome the cultural bias to which we are all liable on occasion and, by so doing, prepare us for work in other cultures.

It also highlights the weaknesses of those courses which emphasise overseas marketing and the business register of the language without identifying where the two meet. It exposes the inadequacy of mastery of the business register alone and stresses the importance of other codes in providing a basis for successful interaction. It is aimed at preparing students for work in an international environment, remarkable for past and likely future changes in trading patterns in which existing language provision is currently unable to meet anticipated needs. For multi-cultural business encounters, a course which focuses on language as the means of internalising the relationship of the elements of communication and human behaviour would appear to be a suitable preparation. There is room for both models since they are complementary to the needs which they serve.

Not least of the benefits is the development of skills which are relevant to the immediate job tasks of graduates within their organisations, the lack of which has been identified in much of the present provision of marketing education[22]. The social skills developed in the process give graduates the potential to effect change; they do not have the authority and status in the early stages of their careers to achieve change through motivation of staff. Marketing is a process as much as a series of techniques. For the new entrant to a company the ability to use these techniques depends on the skills he/she can apply in the process. These skills are as important within an organisation as between organisations.

In a study of marketing strategy implementation, good implementers were seen to use trade-offs, compromise and the principles of exchange to overcome structural barriers to co-ordination of activities. They treated their peers like customers to get things done in the interests of customer satisfaction and the attainment of organisational objectives[23]. Business organisations are characterised by competition for resources to meet group or function interests. In competing for budget allocations such interests are most likely to be served if the individuals concerned, as well as using a system which provides procedures for the "rational" analysis of budget proposals, have an understanding of the power structure of the organisation and mastery of the political skills which can influence outcomes[24]. At a more general level, managers negotiate to guide enterprises in the face of change to obtain fair allocation of overheads for operations for which they are responsible, to obtain a greater say in decision making and to make a host of implicit agreements concerning resources, authority, goals and expectations which have the ultimate aim of producing intended results[25]. Individuals in organisations, seeking to express their individuality in the work situation try to get value attached to what they produce from their efforts[26]. Negotiation skills in terms of self-presentation help them to do this. Not only is negotiation a way of life in order to win contracts or establish and maintain other inter-organisational agreements, it is also at the core of the manager's job within organisations and a means by which he/she can help in determining his/her own job satisfaction.

Guidelines for Course Planning

Given the above conceptual framework, it should be possible to construct a series of objectives for an integrated language/marketing course in which each succeeding objective rests on the previous one. The concept of a hierarchy of objectives is a useful tool for avoiding a conflict of explicit or assumed objectives in providing guidelines for course planning.

A suggested hierarchy for the type of course being advocated might be:

(1) to develop the student's understanding of the interpersonal communication process;

(2) to relate the student's understanding of the interpersonal communication process to the intercultural situation;

(3) to familiarise students with the applications of the techniques and concepts of marketing to the tasks, processes and decisions in the interpersonal aspects of operating across cultures;

(4) to enable the student to relate his language studies to marketing with particular reference to interpersonal aspects;

(5) to develop the student's social skills and particularly the skills of negotiation so that interpersonal interactions are controlled in a way which, as far as possible, meets interaction objectives.

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Adaptable Facilities: An Improved Environment for Business and Office Studies in Further Education

by
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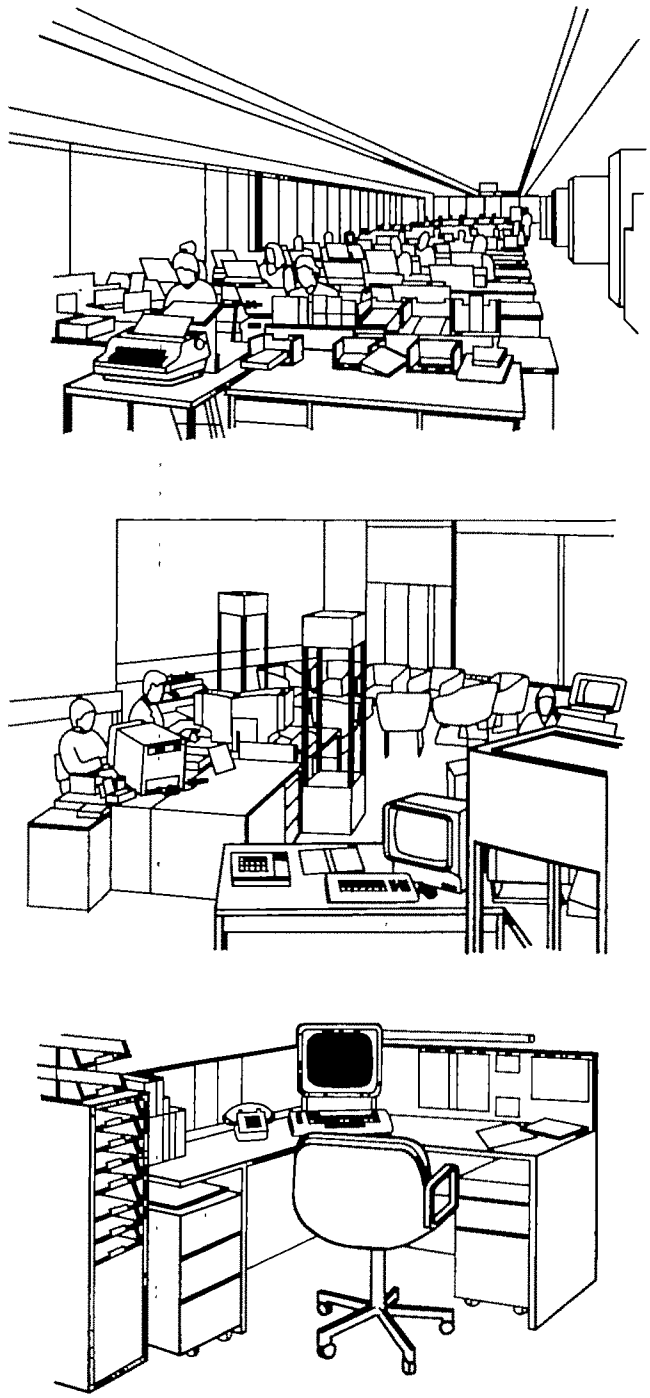
How do further education colleges meet the challenge of preparing their business studies students for work in the modern, technologically well-equipped office? The question is not solely one of curriculum content and familiarisation with new technologies. There are also far-reaching implications for the layout and design of business studies departments, particularly for the areas where students practise the skills they will be using at work.

Business studies departments are undergoing dramatic change, influenced by the demands of the business world, where the introduction of information technology has brought about new patterns of work, and by trends in the curriculum, emphasising a wider range of skills. A *Building Bulletin* from the Department of Education and Science indicates the problems to be overcome, and suggests initiatives that can be taken in making the transition from the traditional classroom with its fixed rows of desks — whether for typing, word-processing or computing — to a learning environment more closely matched to the conditions of the real office.

The DES bulletin follows a study commissioned by the Architects and Building Branch and carried out by the space planners and architects DEGW, together with the Head of Business Studies from Harrow College of Further Education. HMI and heads of department have generally welcomed the study team's recommendations, which draw on visits made to company training departments and to business studies facilities both in further education and sixth form colleges. The bulletin outlines the influences for change, evaluates existing provision, and offers guidelines for a stage-by-stage approach to planning facilities which are adaptable to changing curriculum requirements and ensure value for money.

Pressures for Change

Information technology is clearly the major influence. In the office, manual tasks are increasingly being automated; word-processing support groups or individual work-stations are replacing typing pools; and the distinctions between systems for handling different types of information are disappearing, as the technology becomes more and more integrated. Figure 1 illustrates how the office environment



Note: The secretarial function is shifting from the typing pool via the word processing support group to the individual workstation: all of these situations can be found at present.

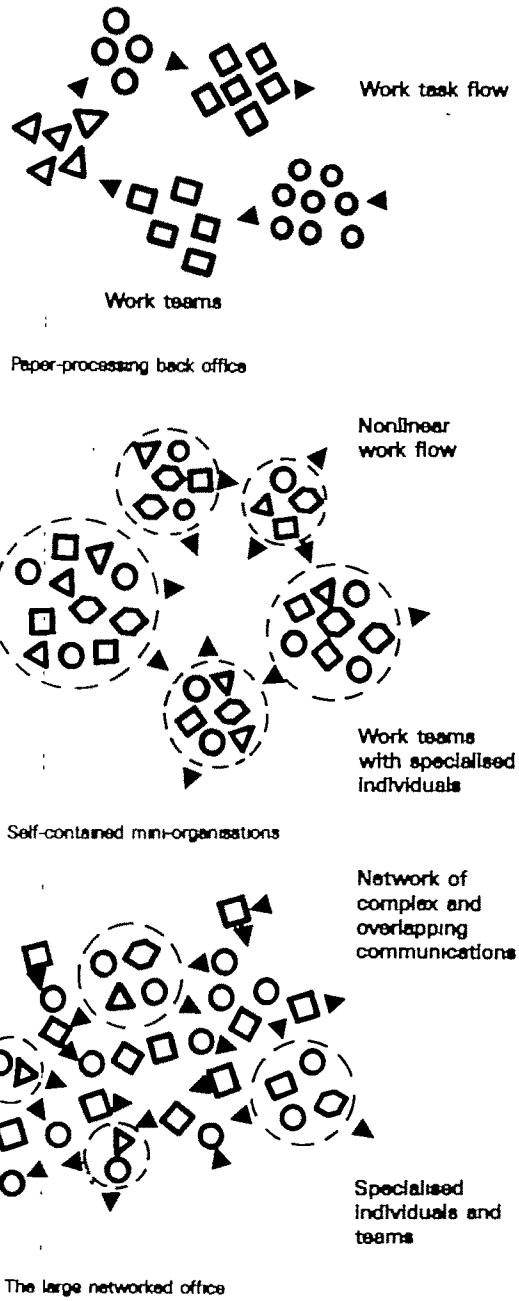
Figure 1.
The Shifting Secretarial Function

is changing under the impact of new technology. In the further education college, the curriculum needs to reflect the progress towards the electronic office, covering such aspects as electronic mail, facsimile transmission, electronic filing and storage, and basic data processing. The bulletin recommends that all students should have the opportunity to learn keyboard skills, and that information processing in particular should form an integral part of business studies courses. Communications teachers as well as skills teachers must be able to use the new technologies, if future curricula are to be successful in preparing students for office systems which bridge the familiar divisions between communications, computing and text processing.

The character of office work is changing in a number of other ways which have a bearing on the skills required and on the way in which they are taught. As Figure 2 illustrates, patterns of work are shifting from a "sequential" work flow, with a sequence of functions, each performed by a specialised team, to the much more complex structure of the "networked" office, where specialised individuals and teams are engaged in parallel tasks. Professionalisation among office workers is increasing and the organisation of the office is becoming less hierarchical; the type of facilities and space allocated to staff members is dictated less by their status, and more attention is given to the quality of the working environment. The range of skills favoured in the job market has broadened to include social and life skills and the ability to operate as a member of a team. For secretaries, traditional shorthand and typewriting no longer suffice: additional skills, such as audio-typewriting and word-processing, are in demand. Indeed, employers frequently treat shorthand merely as a yardstick for measuring ability, while its use in the office declines. Business studies departments are already offering a selection of courses, full- and part-time, advanced and non-advanced: Figure 3 indicates the typical mix of activities. A recent trend in the curriculum, reflected in business studies courses like BTEC and pre-vocational courses, is the teaching of a group of common skills, accompanied by appropriate options. Patterns of learning are changing, but according to the bulletin there is still a need to develop a greater variety of office and business courses, incorporating academic as well as practical elements. The aim should be to help students acquire the versatility that will be an asset in their future secretarial or administrative work.

Responding to Change

Creating opportunities for relevant practical work in business studies courses may be difficult, but, as the study shows, the department should not be inward-looking in its search for a solution. By taking a fresh look at its relationship with the college as a whole, and by examining the business functions which the college performs, suitable possibilities for work experience may be found. For example, the study team cites the "production centre" approach adopted by West Bromwich College of Commerce and Technology. Here, business studies students form themselves into mini-companies producing craft goods in College workshops; the goods are then offered for sale in the College shop, which is run by students in distribution studies. All stages of production are costed, accounts are prepared, and regular board meetings held. Elsewhere there are examples of college catering department



Source: *Harvard Business Review*, 1986

Figure 2.
Patterns of Office Work

Figure 3.
Typical Mix of Activities in a Further Education Business Studies Department

COURSES	AGE GROUP	ACTIVITIES		
		COMMUNICATIONS AND NUMERACY	SECRETARIAL SKILLS	OTHER BUSINESS SUBJECTS
NON-ADVANCED				
FULL-TIME SECRETARIAL	mostly 16–19	•	•	•
FULL-TIME BUSINESS STUDIES	16–19	•	as options	•
PART-TIME SECRETARIAL	16+		•	
PART-TIME BUSINESS STUDIES	16+	•		•
MSC SPONSORED (YTS)	16–17	•	•	•
MSC SPONSORED (TOPS)	19+	•	•	•
GCE O AND A LEVELS	mostly 16–19			•
ADVANCED				
FULL-TIME SECRETARIAL	18+	•	•	•
FULL-TIME BUSINESS STUDIES	18+	•		•
PART-TIME SECRETARIAL	18+		•	
MSC SPONSORED (TOPS)	19+	•	•	•
MANAGEMENT COURSES	18+	•		•
PROFESSIONAL COURSES	18+	possibly		•

In addition to the above, other college departments will increasingly send students to learn keyboarding skills, and new pre-vocational initiatives will also make demands on business studies departments in all of the activity areas.

This table is intended to give an indication of the types of student and activities found in a further education department of business studies. It must be understood that details will vary from college to college and, therefore, the table should be read as a guide only.

restaurants, some of them so successful that the service is extended to the general public. Other areas of the further education college with potential for offering work experience to business studies students include: college reception, administration, the computer centre, refectory accounts, the college offices, and the library.

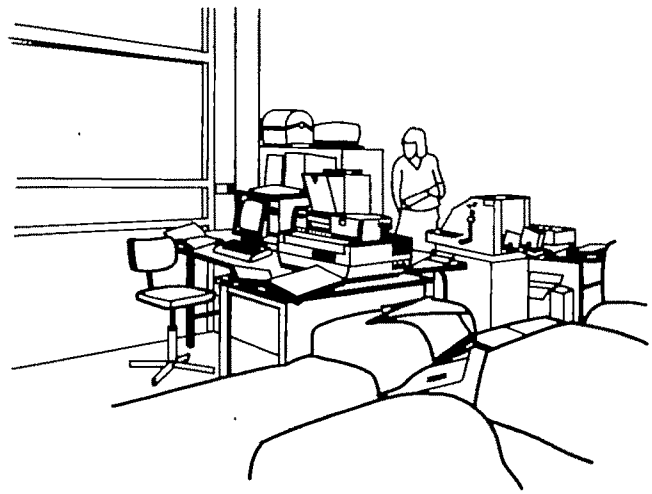
In their evaluation of current provision, the study team draw attention to three aspects: teaching accommodation, equipment and furniture, and consider the factors that may hinder adaptability to change. They describe three categories of teaching accommodation:

- *standard classrooms* — most of which are shared with the college as a whole. These cater for a group size of 16-20, and are typically geared towards "chalk and talk" teaching, with rows of basic desks and chairs facing a blackboard;
- *"single-function" spaces* — i.e. rooms equipped for teaching a single skill, such as typing, word-processing, or the use of computers. Such rooms usually have a fixed arrangement of furniture, set out in rows facing the lecturer. They cater for a group size of 16-20, but are only in use for a limited number of periods each week;
- *"multi-function" spaces* — (see Figure 4) these are areas equipped with a range of technology and workplaces, and designed to simulate the real office. The "training office" is an example. Because of their adaptability to different situations, multi-function spaces can be used more intensively. More space is required per student, and due to the shortage of space, the average group size at present is ten.

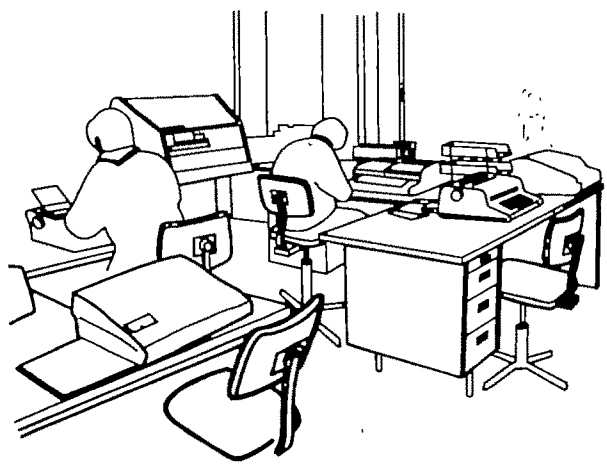
According to the bulletin, the first two categories account for most of the teaching accommodation currently available to business studies departments, with slightly more space being devoted to standard classrooms than to single-function areas. Multi-function space makes up a very small proportion, but demand is on the increase.

A huge array of different kinds of office and teaching equipment needs to be housed, from photocopiers to facsimile transmission machines, from overhead projectors to video-recorders. Information technology creates still further demands: typically it will require its own paper, plugs, leads, peripherals and manuals. Major items of business studies equipment are at different stages in their "life-cycle": new technology such as mini- and micro-computers may co-exist with manual typewriters which are being phased out. Those responsible for planning the purchase of newer technology need to take account of its decreasing lifespan.

There is a particular dilemma associated with business studies furniture: attempts to cope with the varied requirements of office technology have produced a wide range of furniture, often closely tailored to specific pieces of equipment. "Over-design" has thus made some types of furniture redundant. Other concerns identified by the bulletin include the shortage of space for new technologies; ensuring adequate security for information technology; and environmental problems, such as poor lighting for visual display units, and the heat and noise generated by equipment.



Training offices



- more space per student
- wide range of workplaces and technology
- need for flexible services provision
- higher standard of furniture and finishes to 'simulate' office environment
- group size: often limited to 8–10 because of restrictions on available space

Figure 4.
Multi-Function Spaces

Guidelines for Development

Clearly, there are aspects of current provision which may impose limitations on what can be achieved. Hence the study team envisages that the implementation of change will involve not sudden transformation, but rather, three stages of development, with the pace of change varying from one college to another:

Stage 1, where the amount of information technology increases, with more word-processing (partly at the expense of typing), and more use of micro-computers for formal keyboard skills and business practice;

Stage 2, where there is greater emphasis on learning in an office environment, with students determining their own pace, and "business activity areas" (an extension of conventional "training office" accommodation) being established to support project-based learning;

Stage 3, where some business studies tasks are linked with college administration functions, and are thus performed outside the department. Opportunities for business education are expanded, by devising additional activities such as small savers' schemes and by co-operating in inter-departmental production centres, for example with the engineering department.

As the business studies department progresses through these stages, its space requirements will alter, as illustrated by Figure 5. While the need for multi-function areas increases, the use of general-purpose and single-function space decreases, so that the development does not result in other departments losing space. The number of hours of student learning previously spent in several lightly-used spaces is instead spent mainly in the more intensively-used multi-function spaces.

In contrast to the three categories of teaching space that currently make up the business studies department, the study team argue that a much greater variety of areas is needed (space types and space sizes, rather than separate spaces) to support the curriculum adequately. To achieve this, they recommend formulating a planning strategy to provide for a range of teaching areas, including:

Seminar/group spaces
Standard classroom spaces
Typing work-stations
Word-processing work-stations
Computer work-stations
"Business activity areas".

Requirements for "support space" in the form of storage and preparation areas should also be calculated, and space planning in general should be co-ordinated with the purchase of furniture and equipment. Space standards are proposed for each kind of activity, ranging from smaller spaces (15 to 20 square metres) for business activity areas, to the much larger space (in excess of 100 square metres) needed to cater for a group of 20 students in an office environment.

Flexibility should be a key element in the strategy, allowing the department to create new types of space when the demand arises. A critical aspect of planning flexible space arrangements is ensuring that cable services (electricity, data

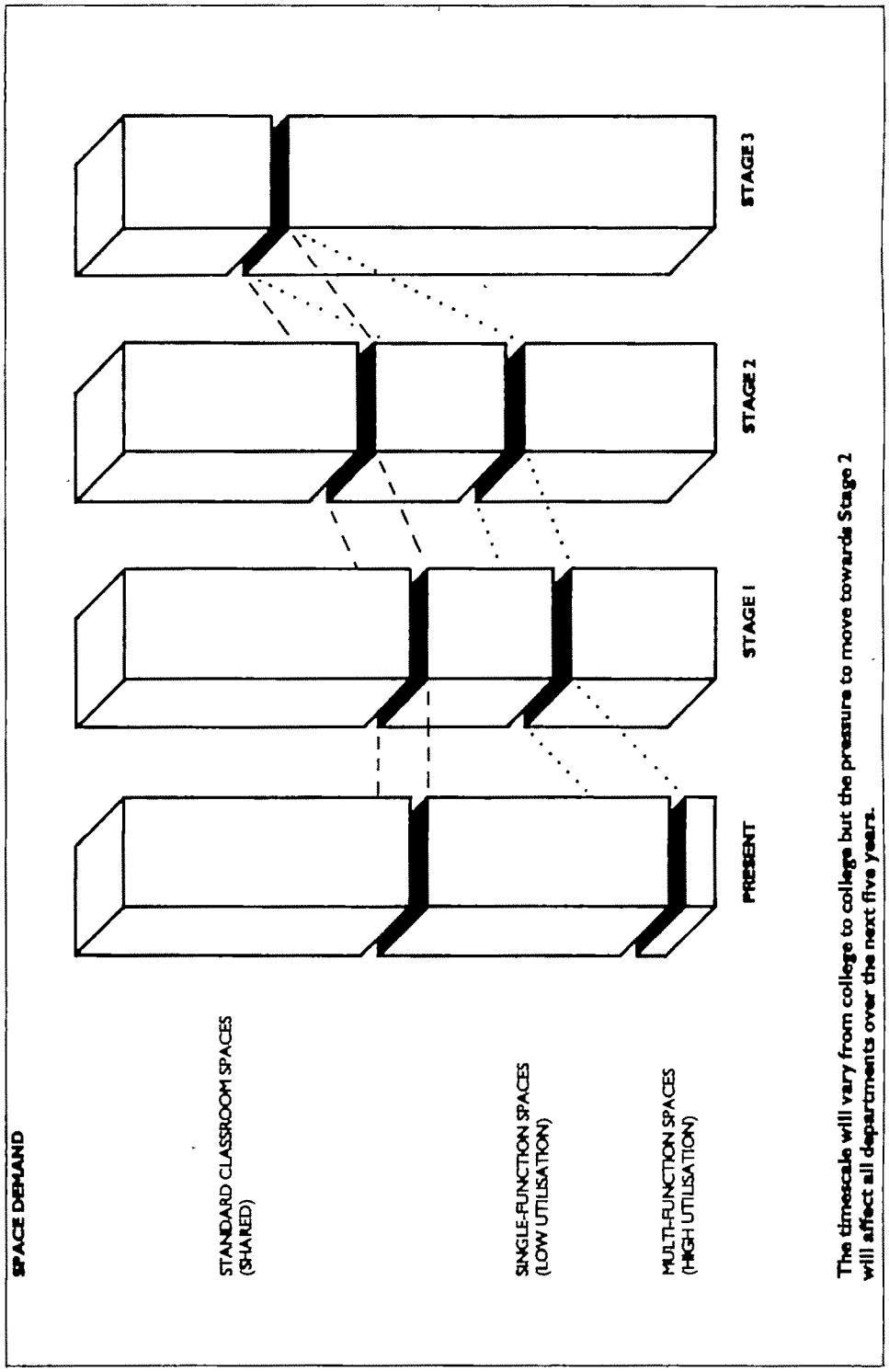

SPACE DEMAND
STANDARD CLASSROOM SPACES (SHARED)
SINGLE-FUNCTION SPACES (LOW UTILISATION)
MULTI-FUNCTION SPACES (HIGH UTILISATION)
PRESENT
STAGE 1
STAGE 2
STAGE 3
The timescale will vary from college to college but the pressure to move towards Stage 2 will affect all departments over the next five years.

Figure 5.
Scenarios for Development — Implications for Distribution of Space

communications and telecommunications) allow for growth. In this respect, traditional classrooms are ill-prepared for the introduction of new technology, often having to cope with insufficient power points, tangled leads, and hazardous cable routes. The report discusses the question of cable distribution in some detail, emphasising the need for safety. The call for flexibility applies equally to furniture: given the rapid changes in technology, the recommended solution is to choose an adjustable, modular system — ideally, a single basic workplace table to which components can be added as needed, and which makes it possible to construct different types of work-station.

The study team do not overlook provision for special needs, recognising that more students with physical disabilities are now taking up further education courses, particularly business studies. The layout of teaching areas therefore requires careful consideration, and attention should be given to providing adjustable working heights, and doorways wide enough to take wheelchairs.

Adapting to change raises a number of questions for business studies departments: questions about the scope of the curriculum and the range of technology and skills it covers; about ways of preparing students for real business pressures; and about how to convey an accurate impression of office conditions and patterns of work. In the curriculum, the study team call for a wider selection of office and business courses, and for an imaginative response to the business education opportunities offered by the college as a whole; in layout and design, they recommend greater variety in teaching accommodation, with areas catering for several different activities, furnished with flexibility in mind. The lesson of the past is that fixed furniture and fittings may inhibit change. Information technology — the major influence, both on methods of learning and on the world of work — advances with gathering speed. Adaptability is therefore crucial, if business studies departments are to meet the challenge of change.

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Emerging Issues in the Growth of Non-College Education and Training Programmes

by
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This article is concerned with an expanding area of American education — industry and government-sponsored education — which has remained largely unnoticed in many academic circles. The lack of recognition appears to stem in large measure from the absence of catalogues and directories, and numbers of FTE in the Federal education statistics[1]. Nonetheless, formal college and university programmes (including continuing education efforts) are probably no more than the tip of the iceberg if one could gauge the total magnitude of all-sector education and training in the United States[2] including sales training[3].

The purposes of this article are quite direct. They are: to explore typical non-college courses and programmes, which may be recommended for formal college credit and indirectly address a vast market potential for university involvement in industry and government educational pursuits; to indicate the nature of non-campus business courses and programmes for purposes of comparison; to explore a number of critical issues in credit review; and to indicate some of the options and opportunities which university administrators and educators may want to pursue.

The perspective from which this article is written is mostly that of an evaluation consultant, or a campus official concerned with transfer credits and appraisal of student applications. To a lesser extent, it reflects on actions that might be taken to capitalise on or co-operate with the many non-college programmes, which will continue with or without college support[4].

Historical Drift

The training and executive development needs of industry and government have been well studied for about 30 years. Initially college campuses enjoyed the special advantage of scarce faculty, physical plant which was not readily available elsewhere, and an expanding market demand for Executive Development Programmes, MBA/MPA and engineering curricula, although certificate programmes also

abounded. This period of easy outreach to industry turned some time ago, perhaps by 1970-75, and almost certainly has experienced slowed growth in recent years [5].

There are a variety of reasons, including general disinterest among university administrators in non-academic programmes, changing numbers of eligible candidates for graduate degrees, high tuition and the like. A consensus of administrators familiar with this market reveals the following problems and/or changes which explain the declining role of university involvement:

(1) The benefits received (by the supporting companies) did not clearly outweigh the costs, particularly when there was high turnover of recently college-trained executives.

(2) Long programme duration and marginal relevance resulted in high student turnover.

(3) There has been a continuing uncomfortable "marriage" of external and outreach programmes with those classically offered on campus, e.g. the traditional MBA, MPA, MSEng.

It is probably immaterial if the discomforts arose from admissions and application standards, non-conformance to superficial accreditation rules, duration of study or flexibility in programme planning[6].

A review of the reasons why education and training programmes have grown at a rapid pace beyond the campus are that industry and government can and does hire professional teachers and trainers in large numbers, particularly in specialities which are needed. The non-traditional campus, given full-paid employee audiences with the required background and experience, simply *produces more learning faster*[2,3].

Nature of Non-Campus Programmes

University-based educators are accustomed to general courses and programmes which have a wide potential applicability, while industry and government educators are working a reverse line of thinking. Thus, non-college courses are devised from specific, job-driven needs and requirements for which there may (or may not) be a suitable text and college course equivalent. It is our considered view that, although the points of departure in industry programmes compared to academic ones are opposite, they are addressing the same basic issues and needs[7].

The matters of scheduling and admission guidelines vary significantly. For example, a typical undergraduate student, basically without experience in a subject area, proceeds through a course over a semester (or quarter) at the rate of one hour a day, and three days a week. The industry equivalent with an experienced audience schedules the same type of work 6-8 hours a day over ten days to several weeks, requiring less outside work because of the experience. Are the results the same? The example is merely the first of several that will be addressed.

Industry and governmental education and training typically grow out of a training section within or attached to a personnel department, although occasionally they

are constituted as schools or colleges by name. Basically they teach and train, but they simply are not academic institutions as we know them in terms of organisational characteristics and functions. The administrative head normally is an area specialist, who has risen through the ranks, has done little formal research, is unpublished, and often has never held a faculty teaching position at a traditional college. The main work of the educational unit is pretty well defined in terms of knowledge and skills needed, the audience is captive, and the output is produced pretty much on schedule — a production-driven model based on internal needs[8].

Educational Classification

Correctly or not, a major line of distinction remains in a deep-rooted separation that reads roughly as follows: what colleges do is education, and what industry does is training. This is a separation common in business schools, for example, where AACSB campuses typically teach *sales management* and assume industry will teach *salesmanship*, negotiation techniques and the particulars of product knowledge which are considered not appropriate college subject matter. Such a distinction really has no merit, i.e. there are *bona fide* college courses in salesmanship which many schools have elected not to teach for reasons unrelated to the granting of college credit[3,8].

The other extreme is demonstrated by an actual course in (telephone) pole climbing, offered by a major public utility company. As campuses have nothing quite equivalent (physical education?) it is handily considered vocational. Between these two extremes, there are literally thousands of examples of industry and government courses and programmes which warrant careful classification. A large number almost certainly are college equivalents, but still subject to complications discussed later. The extensive growth in these courses and programmes is attributable to campuses not extending their offerings to fill those needs; non-campus institutions did. The US Department of Education has estimated that perhaps 60-70 per cent of education and training occurs outside the traditional academic setting.

At present the sheer volume of these programmes and facilities are impressive. Indeed, many of the major trade industry and trade association educational facilities are so advanced as to make college officials professionally envious. In summary, the situation of massive industry education and training is not a futuristic issue, it is here and now. In spite of recent patterns, it is entirely logical to develop an *alternative future* which does not show public education and the role of colleges and universities commanding a declining or smaller share in this particular educational process[9].

Evaluation Process

In our experiences with evaluating industry education programmes for college credit consideration, a number of areas stand out as matters of contrast.

Government/Corporate Scenarios Are So Diverse

Academic experts who are accustomed to the definitions and protocol of North Central Association and similar organisations will be impressed by the lack of

standardisation that is present in industry training and education programmes. Often there is not an accepted way of offering the course or programmes. Certain programmes change locations, moving, say, from a contract with one university only to renew operations at another college 200 miles away during the next cycle of operations. It is quite analogous to the training situation in modern retailing, i.e. a vast assortment of programmes filling thousands of market niches in the sale of educational and training services.

Student Records, Registrar and Library Activities Are Less Essential

While there are a few external company institutions which operate much like colleges, most do not. Transcripts of prior college coursework may not be required. Admission is often geared to job performance and supervisory recommendation above all other considerations, and library materials are skimpy by the usual standards of comparison. Yet even without these academic controls, the student inputs appear to be typical or reasonably uniform — much like the college campus experience. Given that situation, one might logically conclude that the industry selection process provides quite similar classroom and learning experiences, but with substantially different means of recruiting and selecting students.

Regarding Textbooks and Instructional Materials

The actual situation is quite mixed. For example, there are industry programmes in which the company-provided text and related materials simply are much more complete and extensive than would be affordable in a college setting. However, the more common situation is where the text used is neither current or complete, or where the instructor makes extensive use of notes and privately reproduced materials. This is an area in which the majority of non-campus programmes could use some polite but strong advice. Also, it is one of the few criteria where direct comparisons can be made with campus instruction[6].

Grading and the Student Evaluation Process

As a practical matter, non-campus courses are often pass-fail, or ungraded. The situation is much better than one would surmise, i.e. there is no reason to have failing students, and those few falling behind in the assigned coursework tend to drop out. The more critical aspect is *testing*, which may be lightly done. The full-pay, full-time employee as trainee-student is motivated to learn, but this part of the student performance process is not rigorously monitored during the learning phase.

Academic versus Work-Directed Selectivity

With a few exceptions, industry instructors really do not have a "feel" for the academic background of the registered students, and they have only a very limited control over course entrance requirements. Our experience suggests this is not a serious problem, i.e. the nature and type of course is known to students well prior to application. The failure rate is exceptionally low mostly because unqualified entrants simply do not want to risk failure.

Issues and Dilemmas

In the final analysis, university officials must come to a conclusion concerning what to do about requests for giving credit for non-college work. A number of trade-offs and compromising situations necessarily arise, some of which are explained below.

Course Equivalency with Cross-Discipline Recommendations Abound

On the surface it would seem that such a recommendation is not decisive, but inter-college course transfers are common. For example, in the case of a solid course in operations research, its equivalency might be social science statistics, business statistics, or industrial engineering (given the strong mathematical requirements). Of course, the "accepting" institutions are likely to have difficulty in considering it a particular equivalent.

Upper Division and Graduate Distinctions are Especially Unclear

Due to the open nature of the admission process, which is not degree-background specific, the actual student audiences in certain non-college classes is quite amazing. For example, an industry statistics class might have students with backgrounds ranging from two courses in calculus to those with masters degrees in mathematics or statistics, and even PhDs in physics. While the more qualified students would have no need for college credit, the course credit really is more appropriately assigned for the student circumstance than categorical assignment by level and department. This same situation is encountered regularly in graduate advising, but without the complication of interpreting industry programmes for students who seek advanced degrees at campus.

Units of Account Relate to Credits with Difficulty

Since industry courses have not been designed with college credit equivalency in mind, the length and intensity of study often does not conform to the academic units in the same area. Thus, a series of two (or three) related courses in industry often is recommended as equivalent to a three semester hour course in college. This matter is additionally complicated by the numbers and sequences which have been assigned. As a general rule campuses are rather careful in assigning level [3,000 or 4,000 prefix] to mean junior-senior and this is not usual elsewhere. It is common to inquire if the industry training unit consistently assigns a numbering system, *which is equivalent* to what is common practice in the academic community.

Some Academic Caveats Blur Apparent Distinctions

Particularly where a partnership between industry and college is in place, some interesting precedents arise. For example, students taking a particular course might be permitted the option of registering for credit or forego registration thus bypassing credit. The subsequent evaluation problems are complicated because the same instructor teaches both groups of students and the course requirements really do not differ between credit and non-credit students.

Options and Opportunities Facing the Academic Community

There are quite a number of positive responses that might be generated on campus. First and foremost, accepting college credit requests for industry courses is a variation of GED placement and CLEP. As such it should be used as a positive recruiting device. Second, the conversion of the non-traditional student from industry to campus life could be a brutal transition. Usually he is being shifted from a work-related application type of course back to principles and theory, and the initial academic experiences will probably be critical to programme continuation.

As in the case of so many proposals for incremental growth areas, suitable information needs to be gathered and carefully structured in order to know later whether colleges are succeeding in attracting students from the industry market potential. Quite often an apparently solid idea is accepted or becomes admissions policy, and years later there are no meaningful data speaking to how well the effort worked.

There are also opportunities to rent (lease) educational and training space to industry, including overhead recoveries for library, etc. Often campuses bid to offer education at industry locations as contractors. University pricing, including overhead charges, should be competitive with commercial space and facilities. Faculty exchanges are not common, but should prove viable. In the end, a whole range of campus-industry partnerships are likely to be available if a favourable joint venture climate can be developed.

Summary

Industry-sponsored non-credit education is an enormous business, which is growing at a time college enrolment is declining. The traditional college student population base is forecast to continue declining while college operating costs are definitely going up. Financial support for higher education, public and private, may not grow fast enough to allow educational institutions to continue pursuing their present mission. There is also the real possibility that further tuition increases may price some university programmes out of the market.

Some colleges have already developed new non-traditional markets through continuing education efforts, off-campus outreach programmes and so forth. The potential for joint-venture arrangements with industry and government is impressive indeed. But, as underscored in this paper, there are major issues and problems to be addressed and solved in developing this potential. Students (trainees, executives) who have completed non-credit courses off-campus are in large numbers requesting universities to acknowledge this learning by awarding college equivalent credits. The authors believe many of these requests are legitimate and warrant serious consideration for credit. Evaluation teams comprised of academic experts together with industry leaders should be responsible for making recommendations and decisions on these requests. Unless the academic community can overcome this initial problem of working out a reasonable system for awarding college equivalent credit for off-campus learning the prospects for future joint ventures with industry may never be realised and developed to their full potential.

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The "New MBA" — What It Means for Managers

by
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Editor, Management Decision

The business pages of Britain's quality newspapers have recently become enthusiastic again about the Master of Business Administration (MBA) qualification in particular, and management education and training in general. Two reports, by Charles Handy and John Constable, have bemoaned the British propensity for "pick it up as you go, old boy" training rather than the formal development investments of our major industrial competitors, such as France, Germany, Japan and the United States and the so-called "New MBA" is once more with us. Rather like the idea of the "new man", it seems to have been around for some time without any major impact, and without anyone knowing what it all means in practice.

The MBA has been offered by British university business schools since the mid-sixties but, it is fair to say, it has not been "accepted" by the business establishment until the eighties. No national syllabus as such exists, but, by custom and practice, MBA students study for one or two years full-time, or three to five years part-time, a syllabus comprising marketing, finance and personnel management, operations and production management, economics, statistics, computers and business strategy plus a range of ancillary options or study courses such as business ethics, management psychology, distribution management, etc. Students use case studies, which outline, for teaching purposes, how someone else did something, for conclusions to be drawn on what they did right, wrong, and what they should do next. The case study method of teaching has been developed in its most concentrated form by the famous Harvard Business School in Boston, USA.

Dissidents

As could be expected in the educational world, many academic "dissidents" surfaced (and submerged again) during the first 30 or so years of the MBA. The case study method built, it was argued, an "over-theoretical" approach to the messy problems of the real business world, and created a "transfer" problem, by which graduates frequently had difficulties in transferring learned classroom techniques into situations where the variables were different (if, essentially, the problem was similar). The more esoteric disciplines, such as outer reaches of macro and micro-economic theory, were all very interesting but pandered more to the needs of the teachers than the needs of the customers (i.e. students and their future employers).

The very delivery system itself offered by universities was not ideally geared to its target audience. A one or two year full-time programme would usually be out of the question for an early or mid-career manager, unless he or she was willing to resign, take a redundancy option and sell finance (and hope that a job in his/her old company would still be open if nothing more interesting materialised). Therefore, an increasing number of MBA full-timers were immediate postgraduates, with no experience at all to bring to the party — not the original intention. The part-time MBA suffers the curse of all relatively elongated part-time academic programmes — the failure to complete is high. This is due to a variety of reasons. Three to five years is a long time in one place for many younger junior/middle managers on a career path, and new organisations are often unwilling to pick up the sponsorship tab that the old one incurred. Geographical moves intervene, and, quite simply, enthusiasm may wane when faced with producing 20,000 words for a Master's dissertation unless strong pressures from the institution or the sponsoring employer intervene.

A Mark Two MBA

In 1982 the first of what could truly be described as a "Mark Two" MBA was launched by a group of the aforementioned academic dissidents, who formed an independent business school called the International Management Centre from Buckingham — IMCB. Led by Dr Gordon Wills, ex of Cranfield and Bradford Management Centres, who already had the reputation as the UK's top marketing professor, in partnership with other well-known university figures such as Charles Margerison of Cranfield and Keith Howard of Bradford, IMCB set out to address directly some of the difficulties outlined above.

IMCB's brand of new MBA was actually a mixture of old, new and borrowed. Out went the peripheral subjects such as economics, statistics and computing, in favour of a concentration on a "core" of management disciplines of marketing, finance, operations, human resource management and strategy, backed-up by "skills" areas such as team leadership and communications. Corporate sponsorship was compulsory, and the duration of the part-time ("in-post") programme was distilled to a concentrated 18 months only. All major study projects were based around own organisational issues — focus which has led to the accusations of "too narrow" — save a survey of published literature, which forces the student into the current body of knowledge as a theoretical underpinning to his or her essentially practical project.

All in all it seems to have worked. Helped by some industry sympathisers (most notably James Espey, then of International Distillers and Vintners and now Deputy Managing Director, United Distillers, who first bought IMCB's MBA in a major organisation), the concept took off steadily, if not spectacularly. It now boasts some 150 graduates and a similar number of current students on its MBA programmes worldwide, including a programme running in-company with "big eight" accountancy practice Arthur Young.

Black Sheep

Interestingly, the university establishment, who looked disparagingly at Wills and his academic black sheep back in 1983, have begun to flatter by imitation. The

educational philosophy of "action learning" which was resuscitated — some say in bastardised format — by IMCB, now forms a part of most business school and management development managers' portfolios. Recently, and most significantly, comes the second wave of "New MBA", typified by the City University Business School (CUBS) Consortium MBA.

The CUBS MBA, like IMCB's before it, boasts "increasing managerial competence through successful completion of a portfolio of company-based learning activities", assessments "on the basis of performance on in-company learning assignments and not through written examinations" and a promise of "tailor-made programmes to meet the needs of individual managers and their companies". The CUBS MBA shifts the centre of attention from the business school as senior partner in the university/student/sponsor relationship, towards a more equal tripartite balance.

Governing Board

The Consortium is a fascinating next step down the road to the new MBA, in that its members actually form a governing board for the programme, along with CUBS faculty and management. To join, a company pays a £30,000 joining fee and around £15,000 a year membership, plus an estimated £6,320 per student over two years. Non-members are also eligible to join the Consortium MBA, but at an annual enrolment fee of £4,155 plus expenses as incurred, giving a two-year cost of approximately £11,800.

The CUBS programme is, therefore, not a cheap option — indeed it makes IMCB's offering at an expensive-sounding flat fee of £6,950 per student, for 18 months appear generous value. As a marketing technique, it is a brilliant conception, as it effectively "hooks" members into sending a large number of students through the programme to make membership worthwhile, given a £30,000 investment plus £15,000 per annum sunk cost before any activity at all! The more students that members send, the more the unit costs drops, and the more CUBS directors rub their hands gleefully over the unusual situation of a British state university generating a cash surplus.

Both MBAs stress implementation of findings, beyond simply analysis; IMCB's rather more forcefully (in fact, a percentage of the degree credits is awarded for implementation, or at least implementability). IMCB actually builds in a unique feature of "renewability" of their qualification; every five years, graduates have to report formally on their managerial achievements since graduation (including the implementation of recommendations made from their projects). Failing a satisfactory report and evaluation, IMCB's constitution pledges that their graduates will actually not have membership of IMCB renewed, and will forfeit the right to claim a current MBA. It is a policy which some of the more rigorous professional bodies use, but some interesting reactions are due when the first graduates are "struck-off", if this indeed happens. The aim is to keep the qualification current, and indeed IMCB's tutorial faculty also must undergo the same evaluation process.

CUBS, like IMCB, bases its curriculum around five core areas (not quite the same five). Its syllabus is rather more dynamic in that an assessment of what the student already "knows" is followed by a "learning contract" (between student,

client and business school) which covers the objectives to be achieved and the subjects to be concentrated on. The fluidity of the CUBS programme mirrors that offered by other progressive management and educational institutions such as the Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia, which takes a similar "requirements not syllabus" approach, or the American Management Association on their Master of Management Degree.

Both programmes are externally examined; both use industrialists as well as academics as tutors and examiners.

The New MBA — Next Steps and Conclusions

There is little doubt that, intellectually at least, both academics and industrialists believe in the new MBA, and that industry appears to be willing to invest in programmes such as IMCB's MBA and the CUBS Consortium. More traditional programmes, offered by the likes of Cranfield, London, Strathclyde, Aston, Manchester and Bradford, do still take the lions' share of management students. But the activities of independents such as IMCB, Henley and Ashridge have caused the university establishment to revise its thinking — leading to, they would argue, establishment initiatives like the CUBS consortium, which would not have occurred without their example and innovation.

The major proponents of the new MBA illustrate an interesting role reversal. IMCB, once seen as a group of academic mavericks, is now an established institution with a proven track record, whereas City, admittedly armed with the kudos and tradition which university accreditation brings, has only promises to offer. "We wish them well", says IMCB Principal, Gordon Wills. "The market is plenty big enough for more of us, and I personally am delighted that our academic colleagues are following us down this road. It does reassure me that we at IMCB are not prophets crying in the wilderness."

Right Choice

The answer to what is the right choice for students and employers depends, naturally, on what client and student needs are. For the new graduate, and for the career starter or changer, the traditional full-time MBA remains unparalleled in its depth and breadth, as well as being a relatively low direct cost option, despite the shortage of grant aid from Local Education Authorities.

Whilst CUBS have targeted, and will certainly score a high success rate amongst, City of London financial institutions, IMCB will continue to score points because of their willingness to organise "wherever our customers want us", rather than at their modest Buckingham campus. This means that, for example, their imminent Crown Paints' in-company MBA Programme will operate in and around Crown's Lancashire headquarters, and IMCB's tutors will travel to them. Similarly, IMCB's open MBA programmes meet wherever the students decide for their weekend or evening sessions — and IMCB organises tutorial support for them.

Good News

The conclusion on the new MBA for industry and industrialists, is overall that it is good news. For London-based operations, the Consortium should certainly

	IMCB	CUBS
Programme	MBA	Consortium MBA
Price	£6,950 per student (books etc included)	*Membership* £30,000 joining fee £15,000 p a membership fee £ 6,300 per student *Associate membership* £11,800 per student
Duration	18 months part-time	2 years (maximum 3 years) part-time
Externally assessed	Yes	Yes
Evaluation and composition of degree credits	45% Masters Project (in-company) 30% Two major projects 25% Case study analysis	2-3 In-company assignments A "demonstration of managerial competence" throughout the programme and for six months following completion of all input courses
Start-up dates	On demand, but basically September, February and June yearly	September and February (1987 and 1988 schedules)
Admission	Corporate sponsorship minimum four years' middle/senior management experience IMCB admission test First degree not a prerequisite	Normally first degree or recognised professional qualification (Exceptionally, open entry) Corporate sponsorship GMAT test (although result does not necessarily determine admission)
Syllabus	*Core courses* Marketing Operations Finance Human resources Strategy and policy *Other courses* International business Team management Communications Data gathering and analysis Management of a research project Implementation and action for change *Start-up period* including Time management Action learning Learning to learn Information services and sources Contemporary issues	*Core courses* Organisational behaviour Business policy Marketing Accounting and finance Employee relations and personnel *Options* include Information management Production management *Other activities* Primarily team-building

be looked at, and organisations joining would be following a distinguished group of founder members. For organisations looking for a more modest commitment, or for the company-based MBA programme which IMCB have made their speciality, they may be the one to talk to.

Time will tell if the new MBA will be a passing fancy, or will actually metamorphose the British management educational establishment. One suspects — and this may be hopeful — the latter. In any case, interesting days lie ahead in the once unruffled groves of academia, where the wind of change appears to be blowing forcefully.

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Evaluating an Interpersonal Skills Training Programme

by
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In a previous article[1] a process that could be adopted by lecturers who wished to integrate interpersonal skills training into their teaching programmes was discussed. Since that article was published I have implemented the strategies I recommended and have formally evaluated the student learning that resulted from the interpersonal skills training (IST) programme. The purpose of this article is to highlight the key findings from my research and to show that IST does work.

In October 1986 I decided to introduce all the students that I was teaching at Newcastle-upon-Tyne Polytechnic to interpersonal skills training. This was 91 students in total: 20 BA(Hons) Business Studies students on the Marketing Option (BABS), 41 BTEC HND sandwich course students, and 30 postgraduate students on the Diplomas in Marketing and Information Technology.

The starting point for the training programme was to set learning objectives; three general objectives were set which were applicable to all the students:

(1) to create awareness of the need for business people to develop good interpersonal skills;

(2) to develop knowledge and understanding of various interpersonal skills that will be of use to business people;

(3) to allow the students to apply and evaluate their interpersonal skills in a controlled setting.

With learning objectives clearly stated it was then possible to devise learning strategies that would lead to the objectives being attained.

The Training Programme

Implementation of the training programme was the four-stage cycle discussed in my previous article[1].

Step One

The first stage in the cycle was to make the students aware of the need for business people to develop a portfolio of interpersonal skills and to demonstrate to the students how such skills could be successfully used. This stage was primarily revision for the undergraduates who had all previously followed courses in Communication or Business Information. However, the experience of the postgraduates was quite different and so greater emphasis had to be placed on this part of the cycle.

To create awareness of the value of interpersonal skills for business people reference was made to appointment vacancies in the press. Indeed, an analysis was made of 521 vacancies advertised in the professional magazine *Marketing*, and it was found that 38 per cent of them explicitly stated that the successful candidate would need to display good interpersonal skills.

Once the importance of the programme had been established with the students, the next step was to create knowledge and understanding of a variety of interpersonal skills. To do this video tapes were analysed which illustrated good and bad communicators, exercises were tackled which showed the benefits of working in a group as opposed to working on the problem as an individual, and discussions were held on how interpersonal interactions could be made more effective.

Step Two

The second stage in the cycle was to allow the students to practise their interpersonal skills. Although separate exercises were devised for each group of students a similar approach was adopted for all. The BABS students were given the task of devising a new product concept that an entrepreneur could successfully launch onto the market. After researching their respective markets, determining a gap in that market and designing a product concept, the students then had to present their recommendations orally to a would-be entrepreneur. To facilitate the third stage in the cycle, providing the students with feedback on their interpersonal skills, the presentations were video-recorded.

Step Three

Feedback has to be provided in a sensitive manner as the topic under discussion, social skills, is of a highly personal nature. To prevent any of the students developing negative attitudes to the training it is important to try and focus attention on the skills used as opposed to the personalities taking part. Checklists are useful for this, as is encouraging the students to evaluate their own skills before inviting comments from the other observers.

Interpersonal skills, though, are not developed overnight and so the final stage in the cycle was to provide further practice and feedback for the students.

Step Four

To add a touch of realism to the programme for the BA(Hons) Business Studies students and to further develop their commercial awareness, a case study was written in partnership with a major local employer in the north-east, Go-Ahead Northern. Northern is the UK's largest privatised bus and coach operating firm and had just experienced deregulation of the bus industry. The students were given the task of analysing the current state of Northern's business before recommending strategies for the company's short-term future.

To assist with their decision making, visits were organised to two of Northern's depots where discussions were held with employees of the firm. When the students had produced recommendations for Northern's future they then had to present their findings orally to Roger Rhodes, responsible for Business Development, Sales

and Training at Northern. On this occasion it was not only possible to provide the students with feedback on their interpersonal skills but also on how close their recommendations were to Northern's actual business strategies. The Northern case study brought to a close the interpersonal skills training (IST) programme for the BABS students.

The other students (HND and postgraduates) who were introduced to IST in October 1986 followed similar programmes to that described above, similarly based on the four-stage cycle. All the programmes concluded at the end of the 1986/87 academic year when an evaluation was made of the effectiveness of the training.

Evaluating the Training

Before the programme commenced I had decided to evaluate the programme formally in order to obtain feedback on whether such training did in fact lead to an improvement in the interpersonal skills of the students. To achieve this a quantitative approach was adopted which involved all the participating students completing pre- and post-IST questionnaires. The first questionnaire was completed by the students in October 1986.

The pre-IST questionnaire had a number of purposes. Firstly, it was designed to determine the entry behaviour of the students to the programme, to establish which students had undergone previous IST and whether they had found it to be of benefit to them. Then their awareness of various interpersonal skills was established before asking them to suggest which teaching and learning strategies they considered to be of most use for IST. The final part of the questionnaire required them to evaluate their own interpersonal skills, the results of which would form a bench mark to judge the effectiveness of the programme.

Findings of the Pre-IST Questionnaire

All the undergraduates had had previous training with regard to their interpersonal skills, training that had been undertaken at Newcastle Polytechnic. However, the experience of the postgraduates with respect to formal IST training was quite different as Table I shows.

Table I shows that the main skills the postgraduates had been formally introduced to previously, were those relating to non-verbal communication: namely being able to communicate effectively in writing; and the ability to use numerical data to communicate. This could be a reflection of the traditional nature of the curricula prevailing generally in institutions of higher education, and the scant IST provided for employees in commerce and industry. The findings in Table I also reflect the diverse backgrounds of the postgraduates.

All the postgraduates had non-business-related first degrees in subjects as varied as Psychology, Marine Engineering and English Literature, to name but three. Their ages ranged from 22 to 51 years and as a result some had had extensive industrial or commercial experience while others had had none.

The next question to be posed to the students was designed to determine whether they had perceived their previous IST to have been useful to them. The replies to this question were conclusive, as 98 per cent of the students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) answered in the affirmative. Those

Skill	Students Receiving Formal Training (%)	Students not Receiving Formal Training (%)
Using the voice to communicate	32	68
Using body language to communicate	21	79
Training in communicating numerically	61	39
Training in report writing	79	21
Working as a member of a group	63	37
Making a formal oral presentation	53	47
Leading others	32	68
Solving business problems	39	61
Base: 30 students		

Table I.
Postgraduates' Previous IST

postgraduates who had not received any IST were asked whether they thought IST programmes ought to be included as formal components of courses of higher education. Once again the results of this question are conclusive as 90 per cent of the respondents felt that institutions of higher education should be introducing their students to IST.

Thus, the conclusions that can be drawn from this section of the pre-IST questionnaire are that the students who have undergone IST have found it to be of benefit, and those students who have not been introduced to IST believe that such training ought to form part of the curriculum in higher education.

The next line of questioning sought to determine the students' awareness of which interpersonal skills are required by business people. The responses given by both the undergraduates and the postgraduates are ranked in Table II.

Rank	Interpersonal Skill
1	The ability to communicate orally with others
2	The ability to write effectively
3	The ability to solve business problems
4	The ability to work as a member of a group/team
5	The ability to communicate numerically/diagrammatically
6	The ability to use body language to communicate
7	The ability to lead others
8	The ability to read body language and to respond to it
Base: 91 students	

Table II.
Rank Order of Interpersonal Skills Required by Business People

Table II indicates that the students recognise the importance of being able to communicate effectively orally and in writing as being skills required by business people. As the latter skill is often covered by lecturers when assessing written assignments, the ranking confirms that lecturers ought to be paying additional attention to the oral communication skills of the students.

The interpersonal skills detailed previously were explicitly put before the students. However, to discover whether the students believed any other interpersonal skills were needed by business people an open question was put to them which elicited the unprompted responses listed in Table III.

Interpersonal Skill	Number of Students Listing this Skill
Ability to listen to others	9
Ability to tolerate others	2
Ability to be flexible	2
Ability to be patient	1
Ability to persuade others	1
Ability to be courteous/tactful	1
Ability to keep an open mind	1
Ability to understand one's self-image	1
Base: 91 students	

Table III. Additional Interpersonal Skills Required by Business People

While the number of students mentioning unprompted interpersonal skills is not high, those skills which are mentioned could be referred to as being the subtler skills which might distinguish a highly competent interpersonal interaction from a less competent one.

In addition to finding out the students' perceptions of what skills ought to be the focus of attention in an IST programme, it was also felt necessary to obtain their views as to the teaching/learning strategies that they considered to be most appropriate for such a programme.

This was felt to be important to allow any cognitive dissonance that might be present towards the more active learning strategies to be dissipated prior to the training programme being implemented. If it was discovered that the students did have negative views towards role playing, for example, then these negative attitudes would have to be overcome before using role playing for developing the students' interpersonal skills, otherwise the success of the strategy might be in doubt even before it had been implemented.

The results of this question did show that on the whole the students did look favourably on the more active learning strategies as a means of practising their interpersonal skills. The students believed that taking part in role-playing exercises, making formal presentations, working in groups, working on case studies, and being video-recorded would assist them in developing their interpersonal skills. Least effective teaching and learning strategies for IST were considered to be formal lectures on the subject, writing essays, and reading handouts or textbooks. However, four students did indicate that they did not feel role-playing exercises to be of use, and when their personality traits were investigated it was found that these students tended to be of a quiet nature. This information was of value as it indicated that these students would require additional prior counselling before commencing the IST programme, in order to reduce the potential threatening nature of the exercise.

The final section of the questionnaire required the students to assess their own interpersonal skills according to certain criteria. The purpose of this was two-fold:

(1) to acquaint the students with the process of self-evaluation, then to encourage them to identify their own strengths and weaknesses;

(2) to provide me with the students' perceived level of competency prior to going through the IST programme, which would provide a yardstick for determining whether the programme had been of benefit, by comparing a post self-evaluation of the students' skills with the first evaluation.

The results of the first self-evaluation of the students' interpersonal skills are given in Table IV.

Ability to	HND Rank	HND Mean score	BABS Rank	BABS Mean score	Postgraduates Rank	Postgraduates Mean score
Communicate in writing	1	3 58	1	3 03	1	2.76
Work in a group	2	3 06	3	2.90	3	2 71
Communicate numerically	3	2.81	9	2 17	1	2 76
Read body language	3	2 81	2	3 00	4	2.60
Lead others	5	2 68	4	2 87	5	2.46
Chair a meeting	6	2.43	5	2 81	9	2 13
Make an oral presentation	7	2 41	6	2 78	8	2.19
Use body language to communicate	8	2 29	7	2 71	7	2 26
Use voice effectively	9	2 28	8	2.45	6	2 31

Base 91 students (HND = BTech HND sandwich course, BABS = BA Business Studies)

Table IV. Students' Self-Evaluation of their Interpersonal Skills

In Table IV the mean score is the average rating given by all of the students in each of the student groups for the skills listed, on a scale ranging from 1, lowest score, poor ability with regard to the interpersonal skill to 5 highest score, very competent ability.

It is interesting to discover that although the undergraduates have been through previous IST programmes they evaluated their ability to communicate effectively in writing as being their number one skill, as did the postgraduates. All respondents tended to evaluate their ability to work as a member of a group highly, and their ability to read the body language used by others.

The main weaknesses as evaluated by the students appeared to be in the areas of being able to make a formal presentation to others; the ability to use their body language to communicate; and their ability to use their voices effectively, i.e. using varied tones of voice, varied speeds of speech and varied pitch.

The lack of confidence about being able to make a formal presentation, and being unable to use the voice effectively, are weaknesses in that these skills were ranked as being the most important interpersonal skills required by business people in Table II. Thus, the research indicated the importance of incorporating such training into the IST programme.

It is also interesting to compare the self-evaluations in terms of the mean score ratings given by each of the three groups of students. As can be seen from Table IV the undergraduates do rate their interpersonal skills more highly than do the postgraduate students. The HND students have a mean score rating from 3.58 to 2.28, while the postgraduates' range is from 2.76 to 2.31. This could not only be attributed to the undergraduates' previous IST but also to their general overall awareness, and self-awareness of interpersonal skills.

When analysing the self-evaluations of the students, a breakdown was also provided according to the age and sex of the respondents, but no significant differences were noticed. However, those students who considered themselves to be introverts or quiet-natured rated their interpersonal skills at a lower level than their more outgoing peers.

Thus, the first questionnaire that was completed and analysed prior to the start of the IST gave valuable information that was fed into the programme concerning the interpersonal skills to be developed, the teaching and learning strategies to be used, and which students might require additional counselling to prepare them for the training. A second questionnaire was then issued to the students upon completion of their IST programme to obtain further feedback from the students on the value of IST in the higher education curriculum.

Post-IST Questionnaire

Findings

To determine how effective the IST programmes had been a follow-up questionnaire was completed by the students approximately two weeks after their last IST activity had been completed. This questionnaire included a series of attitude statements before once again asking the respondent to rate their interpersonal skills against certain criteria. The findings from the battery of attitude statements are given in Table V as percentage scores on the six-point scale shown.

To some extent the findings in Table V are self-explanatory. However, additional comments need to be made about some of the responses given.

Of those students who said that having to make formal presentations had not improved their oral communication skills, the reason given by four of these students (out of seven) was that their oral communication skills were already good and they felt it would be difficult to improve them.

Courses which do involve IST and require the students to be actively involved in the learning process would appear to be more enjoyable from the students' point of view, with 84 per cent of the respondents having this attitude. The perceived "quality" of the course is also higher if such learning strategies are implemented by the lecturer.

Indeed, Table V does indicate the strength of the positive attitudes of the students to the IST programme that was implemented. However, have the students perceived any improvements in their interpersonal skills? Table VI provides the results of the post-self-evaluation study: the percentage change is the proportionate change in the students' interpersonal skills since the first self-evaluation.

Table VI shows the improvements the students perceived to have taken place in their interpersonal skills as a result of participating in the learning activities.

Attitude	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Courses involving making oral presentations are more enjoyable to participate in than those that do not	1	9	6	31	34	19
Working in a group has improved my working relationships with others	1	5	5	16	51	22
Case study work has improved my problem solving skills	0	1	3	32	49	15
Making formal presentations has improved my oral communication skills	0	5	3	18	37	37
Being questioned by my peers has improved my self-confidence	0	8	3	39	38	12
Being video-recorded is a valuable means of feedback	0	1	1	16	50	32
Being video-recorded is enjoyable	6	11	19	36	22	6
The IST has been useful to me	0	0	4	0	52	43
IST improves the "quality" of the course	0	0	5	27	39	29

Base. 91 students

Table V.
Student Attitudes Towards IST

Skill	HND				BABS				Postgraduates			
	Before rank	Post rank	Post mean score	% change	Before rank	Post rank	Post mean score	% change	Before rank	Post rank	Post mean score	% change
Work in a group	2	1	3 5	14	3	1	3 63	25	3	1	3 0	11
Read body language	3	2	3 34	19	2	3	3 26	9	4	1	3 0	15
Lead others	5	3	3 18	19	4	6	3 16	10	5	8	2 56	4
Write effectively	1	4	3 15	−12	1	3	3 26	8	1	3	2 87	4
Make an oral presentation	7	5	3 06	27	6	2	3 42	23	8	6	2 82	29
Use voice effectively	9	6	3 00	32	8	8	3 05	24	6	5	2 84	23
Use body language to communicate	8	7	2 93	28	7	9	2 84	5	7	7	2 61	15
Chair a meeting	6	8	2 81	16	5	3	3 26	16	9	8	2.56	20
Communicate numerically	3	9	2 68	−5	9	7	3 15	46	1	3	2.87	4

Base 91 students

Table VI.
Second Self-Evaluation of the Students' Interpersonal Skills

Table VI shows the improvements the students perceived to have taken place in their interpersonal skills as a result of participating in the learning activities. With regard to the rankings all three groups of students now perceive their main strength to be that of being able to work with others. This could be accounted for by the fact that all the exercises the students participated in involved them working in small groups with other students, thus encouraging them to develop good working relationships. In addition, most of the other subjects the students studied also involved elements of group work, which no doubt contributed to the students' confidence in this area.

For all the students, either the second or third ranking strength identified was that of being able to read the body language of others. This could have been ranked so highly due to considerable use being made of video-recordings and the subsequent feedback sessions in the seminars which highlighted non-verbal behaviour, behaviour that the students might previously have been unaware of.

Writing skills tended to be ranked next before the students listed their oral communication skills as being a strength. Although the oral communication skills of the students tend to be placed in middle rankings, it is with this skill that the greatest improvement is perceived to have taken place. The HND students felt that their ability to use their voices had improved by 32 per cent, and their ability to make a formal oral presentation by 27 per cent. The same skills were felt by the BABS students and the postgraduate students to have improved by 24 per cent and 23 per cent, and 23 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively. In fact, the aforementioned percentage increases for the oral communication skills are amongst the highest increases recorded.

Only two interpersonal skills received lower mean scores than for the first self-evaluation — the writing and numerical presentation skills of the HND students. This could be because little formal attention had been paid to these skill areas, and also because one assignment was 100 per cent orally assessed, thus reducing the need for the students to concentrate on these skills.

A conclusion, therefore, that can be drawn from Table VI is that the interpersonal skills of the students have improved as a result of going through the IST programme. However, it has to be stated that the students will have been using, and hence developing, their interpersonal skills in other subject areas. The feedback received by the students from the other lecturers, however, will not have been so systematic, or perhaps so constructive as that provided in this programme.

In addition to the quantified results discussed above, a final element of the post-IST questionnaire asked the students whether they had any further comments to make. A selection of the responses to this open question are listed below:

> The training is essential. Although not particularly enjoyable at the time, it does improve your self-confidence.
>
> The importance of such skills should be made clear to other courses, e.g. Engineering. At some stage everyone will have to make a presentation.
>
> This training is absolutely necessary and should be a formal requirement of all courses.

Although only three comments have been presented, they do reflect the views of the majority of the students answering this question. In fact, there were very

few negative comments forthcoming. Those that were proposed made suggestions for improving the IST programme, such as allowing more time for the role-play exercises, and providing more information in the case studies that were used.

Conclusion

When all the above evidence is combined it would appear that the IST programme described did meet the objectives that were initially set. The students' awareness of the need for good interpersonal skills in business was further developed. Their knowledge and understanding of the three key elements of interpersonal behaviour were applied in a marketing context, and the students developed a framework for evaluating, and hopefully modifying, their interpersonal skills in the future.

As well as meeting the aforementioned objectives, the programme was perceived by the students as being a valuable part of the curriculum which was thought to be just as important as the subject knowledge that is developed while in higher education. A further bonus is that the strategies that were designed and implemented did lead to the students being motivated by the programme, and hence enjoying the learning activities. Clearly, an important implication for my future teaching is that the impetus that was given to IST in this programme should be continued in the future.

Reference

1. Hind, D.W.G., "Integrating Interpersonal Skills Training into the Curriculum", *Business Education*, Vol. 7 No. 4, 1986, pp. 24-37.

Skill Development on Business Studies Programmes

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This work has been made possible by the award of a grant from the European Social Fund to review the teaching of skills on a business studies course. The programme chosen was BTEC Higher National, although it was intended to extend the findings to other business studies programmes. The aim was to formulate a systematic scheme of skill development which would make maximum use of learning transfer.

Background to the Problem

It has been felt for some time that although very considerable effort was being invested in skills teaching, the result tended to be haphazard; whilst syllabuses relating to knowledge have been carefully structured and sequenced, little importance has been allocated to the need for a progressive pattern of skill development. For instance, one tutor in the human resourcing area might be giving practical exercises in interviewing skills for recruitment purposes, whilst another, working in the marketing discipline, might be sending students out on survey interviews. The relationship between the two activities might not be perceived by either staff or students.

Research work on the whole area of the nature of learning and of skills is vast, and we do not deny that rigorous and controlled investigation is necessary before an ultimate perfect scheme can be reached, if indeed it is attainable! In the meantime, however, tutors are faced with immediate teaching/learning problems and the money which was given for this project was not supplied for research purposes, but for a practical attempt to bring some order and logicality into the situation using what appears to be the most appropriate knowledge and expertise currently available. We therefore make no apology for the fact that the resultant plan rests on certain assumptions which may appear to be crude. Our answer would be that the first step forward is to make these assumptions explicit, and validate them by results and feedback of the teaching/learning which ensues. In this way, the scheme can be reshaped and refined, and at the same time possible future findings from research may be borne in mind.

Our Approach

Our approach was to draw up an inventory of the basic skills required by employers and then by analysing these skills to draw up lists of constituent elements such as listening skills or summarising. We quickly realised the enormous semantic difficulties of, for instance, attempting to distinguish between a "skill" and an "attribute" and whether a particular item was really one skill or many; questions which in themselves would make a research study. It is recognised that performing a task can require several different skills, and there is a lack of conceptual clarity on the use of these terms. We felt that at this stage we should adopt a broad approach and use the term "skill" to cover any skill-related requirement which employers deemed of prime importance, and "element" to describe the basic abilities which appeared to make up that skill.

Our approach is not inconsistent with the argument propounded by Annett and Sparrow[1]:

> Theories about the nature of skill... indicate that skilled performance of whatever complexity is composed of units which are all essentially the same... the validity of approaches in terms of basic or generic skills cannot rest on any theoretical basis, but must depend on the formulation and application of empirical criteria, the most important of which is utility.

The utility of our inventory was to assist in compiling a skills map which indicated each skill on different parts of the curriculum. The map shows the various elements constituting each skill to enable staff and students to recognise the links, similarities and differences. Theories of learning transfer and the conditions under which it takes place are complex, but it is generally agreed that transfer is assisted if the student can associate and integrate new learning with other learning which has already taken place, and by the understanding of general principles and concepts, (see Kenney and Reid[2]). We realise that our analyses require further refinement on the basis of empirical evidence gained from experience. In the interim, however, any resultant discussions about the skills and the elements of which they are composed will prompt both staff and students to think more deeply about these relationships. The "skills map" will then serve as a basis for a review and systematic revision of the skills teaching/learning throughout the programme. This activity should increase learning transfer.

The Criteria to be Met by the Scheme

- Because of economic constraints it must be relatively inexpensive to implement.
- For similar reasons it must not be time-consuming for staff, who are committed to many different activities. On the contrary, it must provide help for them.
- To ensure motivation of staff and students the programme must have perceived relevance.
- The skills must be appropriate to a general business career as opposed to those specifically relating to a particular occupation.
- The skills must transfer to the working environment.
- The programme must provide for progressive development.

- As it is not going to be possible for students to acquire the ultimate level of competence in all skills during the programme, the ground must be laid for future development. They must learn to learn.
- Assessment by self, peers and tutors, must be a feature of the programme.
- Long term validation, both internal and external, must follow the inception of the new scheme and appropriate modification, reorganisation, etc. must take place as a result.

What are the Basic Business Skills?

Three methods were used to identify the basic business skills and attributes required by business studies students on entering employment:

(1) Telephone interviews with 47 former BTEC HND Business Studies students.

(2) Twenty interviews with practitioners of management and a seminar held for nine employers.

(3) Literature and documentation published by professional bodies relating to this field.

There were a number of difficulties in obtaining this information. Originally a questionnaire was sent out to a random sample of former BTEC HND students and to employers. This resulted in such a poor response rate it was decided that it would be more productive to use telephone interviews for former students, and to hold interviews and a seminar for employers. The purpose of the latter was to determine the skills which employers sought from recently qualified business students. Some employers grouped the skills, and their perceptions were confirmed by comparisons of similar lists from different professional bodies. We used these groupings to analyse the results of the interviews. An interview schedule formed the basis of our conversations with both students and employers. It became evident, as we had anticipated, that there were semantic and conceptual difficulties for the interviewees in differentiating between "skills" and "attributes" and the tendency was for them to use general terms such as "good communicator", "high level of interpersonal skills", and "leadership qualities". The conceptual inadequacy and the lack of a common language to communicate with any degree of precision has been remarked upon in other research into the subject[3]. We found that the seminar and interviews enabled interesting comments to be explored by means of probe questions, resulting in clarification.

From those completing the BTEC HND in Business Studies in 1982/83, 1983/84 and 1984/85, 47 students were selected at random. The questions were selected to pinpoint those skills and attributes which were most useful to them in employment. In addition, an attempt was made to identify those skills they found they needed in employment which had been neglected or not fully developed by their course.

Of the 47 students, four (8.5 per cent) were not in employment. Of those in employment, 53.3 per cent were in service organisations, 27.6 per cent worked in manufacturing and 10.6 per cent worked in the public sector. Of past students, 34 per cent were in organisations employing less than 500 people, 8.5 per cent in organisations employing between 500 and 1,000 people and 53.2 per cent worked for companies employing more than 1,000 people.

From the West Yorkshire area 20 employers participated in interviews and nine in a seminar. Of the 29 employers, 35 per cent were from service organisations, 55 per cent from the manufacturing sector and 15 per cent were from the public sector. Their job titles included personnel manager (20 per cent), managing director (15 per cent), senior manager (25 per cent), manager (15 per cent), trainer (5 per cent) and others (20 per cent). The only prerequisite was that each manager had considerable experience in employing business graduates. We realise that our sample size is comparatively small and that percentages can therefore be misleading. Readers might however be interested in our findings which are given in Table I and Table II.

The results to the question: "What are the most important skills required by a business studies diplomate on entering employment?" can be seen in Table I.

	Most Important Skills	Students %	Employers %
1	*Communication*		
	Listening	0	30
	Questioning and responding	0	17
	Use the telephone for business purposes	20	55
	Oral reporting/discussions	53	60
	Interviewing	24	35
	Use simple language	0	32
	Write concisely	10	18
	Write good letters, memos and reports	43	45
	Take notes from interviews etc.	18	12
	Minutes and agendas	12	18
	Devising questionnaires	0	5
2	*Group/Interpersonal Skills*		
	Work as a member of a team	37	42
	Leadership	35	16
	Ability to motivate others	12	29
	Be self-motivated	18	37
	Persuasive skills	11	18
	Fairness in applying rules and procedures	8	21
	Sensitivity to people	34	18
	Project oneself	22	12
	Deal with complaints	16	21
3	*Numerical/Financial Skills*		
	Arithmetical competence	156	20
	Graphs	0	5
	Analysis and interpretation of data	22	26
	Estimating and costing	13	28
	Budgeting	14	31
	Book-keeping	2	9
	Interpreting balance sheets	5	12
	Stock control	3	8
4	*Information Technology*		
	Keyboard skills	5	15
	Information retrieval and input	22	29
	Use of business software	39	34
5	*Professional Skills*		
	Awareness of and ability to adapt to change	0	38
	Knowledge of and ability to apply legislation, policy and procedures	2	42
	Forward planning	0	6
	Time management	24	33
	Think through and solve problems	0	12

Table I.
The Most Important Skills Required by Business Studies Diplomates on Entering Employment

Although the list of the most important attributes required by students on their first job appointment proved to be lengthy, the most significant are shown in Table II.

Most Important Attributes	Student %	Employer %
Initiative	12	60
Enthusiasm/drive	20	50
Flexibility	8	50
Self-confidence	50	20
Objectivity	10	21
Professional manner/appearance	9	52

Table II.
The Most Significant Attributes Required by Students Entering Employment

There is obviously a question mark over how far these attributes can be taught. They are, however, closely related to attitudes which we decided could be influenced by the design, conduct and culture of the programme as a whole, which should be totally businesslike. It was also considered helpful to make students aware of employers' views.

Having drawn up an inventory of the necessary requirements, we were faced with the problem of how to ensure that these were all introduced into the programme at the right time and in the most advantageous way. Skills such as numeracy are developed gradually by means of detailed and carefully designed syllabuses to enable students to master basic skills before progressing to more complex operations. We asked ourselves the following questions. Was there any way of applying this principle to the heterogeneous list of skills our investigations had produced? Was it possible to devise a hierarchy of these skills so that basic elements could be presented and practised as a foundation for more complicated applications? We turned our attention to the theory of learning.

Principles of Learning

Learning Transfer

Literature on how people learn and acquire skills proliferates day by day, yet there is no comprehensive theory available to trainers or educationalists which provides a complete explanation of the nature or method of learning transfer.

We were attracted to the principle propounded by Douglas Seymour back in 1959[4]. The greater the number of variables, the greater the mental load and the more difficult the task. The learner cannot concentrate on all aspects at once and therefore each task should be introduced in as simple a form and with as light a mental load as possible. The opportunity for practice and consolidation should then be provided before attempting to transfer what has been learned to a more complex situation.

Typically a manager in the business environment, who has to provide information does not do so in a vacuum. He will have to take into account his own role, his audience, the preferred medium of communication, the channels of communication open to him, the business and social environment in which he works, the content of the message as well as the technique he wishes to employ. It is evident then that tasks may take place in a multivariate form and that these variables will impose either a heavier or lighter mental load upon the person undertaking the task.

It was decided that we could use this idea (Figure 1) to make a subjective assessment concerning the level of skill involved in a task which could then both provide a theoretical map of skill development and determine the ideal progression.

While this method of differentiating between various levels of skill might suggest a hierarchy of development, it would be more accurate to describe the process as a "continuum" of development. If we commence the teaching and practice of skills at the lowest level, i.e. the point of minimum mental load and thereafter take trainees onto higher level skills, then there should be a constant movement which pulls back towards its own base (see Figure 2). The reason for this is clear. As trainees become adept at lower level skills then this effectively reduces a part of the mental load incumbent upon the next level of application. Thus the degree of difficulty that a trainee will experience in applying a skill will be diminished by practice and experience; as success and competence is gained in a skill then the more instinctive and habitual it becomes and the smaller the mental load.

Figure 1.
Level of Skill Involved in a Task

The number of situational variables = Mental load = Level of skill

Figure 2.
Continuum of Development

Minimum mental load	..... Continuum of skills development	Maximum mental load

The method which we employed, therefore, involved developing a hierarchy of skills.

This was achieved by grading the tasks we presented to students according to the degree of skill required as defined by the mental load.

Annett[5] has shown that learning transfer may depend upon how a skill is taught, the mental set of the trainee and the circumstances and the way in which it is introduced. It was decided that it was necessary to introduce the above ideas to the trainees in a way which produced a positive mental set, i.e. so that the benefits of the scheme were clearly discernible to them, right from the beginning of the course. The map enables students to grasp the idea progression of skill and provides a means of explaining to them the transfer of learning from one skill to another.

Learning to Learn

The second principle which we were anxious to incorporate into our scheme was that of self-learning, i.e. helping students to learn how to learn. Within the limitations of a two year programme the aim must be to provide a foundation upon which to build, so that they could improve with further experience the skills they had already learned, and deal with new conditions in future employment.

Our model provides a logical framework to demonstrate the possibilities of learning transfer. For instance, an exercise on survey interviewing in a session on marketing gives practice in the basic skills of formulating questions, approaching people for interview, etc. The situational variables are reduced by the use of a prepared questionnaire schedule with precoded answers. This provides practice which would transfer and stand the student in good stead in a less structured situation, possibly in a human resources tutorial, where the interviewer has to listen and formulate questions at the same time, as well as remembering the interviewee's responses.

It is accepted that a student will not reach perfection in all skills by the end of a course of training, but encouraging them to think about how skills transfer to new situations enables them to face change with more confidence and to realise that learning is a continuous process.

The scheme encourages students to practise a variety of learning styles using Kolb's learning cycle[6] of concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation. Students are given practice (concrete experience) and on performance they receive feedback from tutors and colleagues (reflection) so that they are able to formulate principles and guidelines (conceptualisation) for future action. They are then encouraged to try them out in a safe situation (experimentation) which leads them back to concrete experience. Our model provides a conceptual framework of skill progression.

The Skills Map

We have examined each of the main skill areas, analysed what is involved and created a map which will provide for the introduction of a skill at a very basic level at the beginning of the course, to be followed by tasks at a more sophisticated level with additional items to increase the cognitive load, later. The sessions might well be taken by different subject tutors, as many skills are involved in different map functional areas, but the use of the map ensures clear communication of skills curriculum content thus enabling progressive development and integration. We do not see this map as finally and satisfactorily completed and at times there must be compromises of "best fit". It is likely to be subject to a number of revisions, but it provides an integrative structure towards which we can all work, in contrast to a situation where each tutor was providing skills training for a particular function without being very certain of what was happening elsewhere.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the levels of problem solving skills and of group process skills. The different items have then been introduced into the course at appropriate times, under different subject areas, and/or in conjunction with relevant assignments.

A detailed analysis of current teaching showed us that we were including most skills, although in a haphazard fashion. The concept of levels ensures that in future skills will be developed progressively.

Problem Solving

Level I

- Solutions sought within clearly defined parameters and specified sources
- Limited range of knowledge and skills required

Level II

- Solutions require multivariate analysis from various sources of knowledge
- Solutions require a greater range of skills (eg numerate, interpersonal, summarising)
- Solutions require evaluations of alternative methodologies or answers

Level III

- Recognition, specification and definition of problems
- Explanation and evaluation of methods adopted
- Recommended solutions stated with reasons
- Further breadth and depth required than previous levels and further variety of skills

Figure 3.
Level of Problem Solving Skills

Group Skills

Level I *The individual within informal groups*
- Increased perception of one's individual contribution to group behaviour
- Development of interactive skills in group situations

Level II *Role playing within formal groups*
- Developing skills and behaviour associated with particular roles
- Developing responses to more formal division of labour in group tasks

Level III *Multiple role playing within formal groups*
- Developing skills for complex multiple role taking situations, i e where several roles are held at one time by an individual, or where political dimensions influence behaviour

Figure 4. Levels of Group Process Skills

Study Skills

We rediscovered the fact that the basic level of many skills is to be found in study skills. Figure 5 relates reading texts to notetaking and Figure 6 relates notetaking to report writing. They are part of a larger design demonstrating how notetaking and reading texts are related to making verbal presentations, how organising college work is related to the management of time, and so on. From this exercise we recognised more forcibly that study skills should be presented not merely as a necessity for success in the academic world, but as inculcating habits of thought and personal organisation which become a solid basis for business life, and that the whole course should be designed as a vehicle to this end. For instance, it is often possible for students to attain good academic results although their time management leaves much to be desired. As they climb up the business ladder, however, where pressures and time constraints become greater, this deficiency can start to show and impede further progress.

Reading texts/notetaking
- Determining objectives
- Reading at speed
- "Highlighting" books, reports, etc
- Helicopter ability
- "Sharpening" salient features
- Notetaking

Figure 5. Reading Texts and Notetaking

Notetaking/report writing
- Listening skills
- Helicopter ability
- "Sharpening" of salient facts
- Grammatical and simple use of words
- Page layout
- Report writing

Figure 6. Notetaking and Report Writing

Orientation Programme

The orientation programme sets the scene and provides the starting point for the acquisition of skills. The programme aims to ensure that students are aware

of the importance of the special sequencing of skills as described by the maps. Former students are invited to talk about their experience of work, as it is hoped that they will emphasise the importance of acquiring business skills.

Because our model suggests that elements of study skills can be used as a base from which other skills are developed, many of the activities on the orientation programme are related to that logic. For example, opportunity is provided to practise summarising different types of information, which will be useful in notetaking, report writing and finally, project work. Students are introduced to the importance and techniques of time management. This is introduced by exercises in a safe situation but increasing skill is required as the demands of the course become greater.

The students' self-awareness of their own study skills level is heightened by asking them to complete two questionnaires which were adapted from those used by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC). As the questions are accessed, answered and analysed by micro-computer the activity provides practice in keyboard skills, and emphasises the importance of studying and learning. Later on the orientation programme students play a business game which provides further practice in computing, group skills and in summarising and evaluating numerical data.

Work books

Students are given a Skills Work Book, in which they are able to log and summarise their own skill development. The book is not introduced in order to profile skills, but to profile the means for students to become aware and conscious of their own level of skill development. In accordance with our initial criteria the work book, which we are in the process of writing, will be inexpensive to produce and easy to operate. Its use should assist the development of tutor/student relationships, by providing a focus for discussion. At present tutors discuss assignment grades with tutees, but in future skills will be clearly assessed. When either the tutor or student is dissatisfied with the level of skill that has been achieved, advice will be given by the tutor. In addition, suggestions on how to improve skills will also be printed in the work book. In this way, the use of the work book should help the student become more autonomous and responsible for his/her own skill development.

The advice given will vary according to the skill in question. It may refer the student to a special skill self-development pack, or suggest that an article is read, or that particular behaviour is practised. For instance, questioning techniques or listening skills can be used very effectively in everyday life. Students will be responsible for the care and monitoring of the work book, but for security reasons tutors will have duplicate copies of the levels of attainment achieved by the students. It will be possible to use this information as the basis of an employment reference, although this is clearly not the main intention of the work book.

Staff Training

Seminars have been held to explain the model to staff. These sessions have facilitated discussion and in part provided a strategy for managing curriculum development. Further training sessions are envisaged to acquaint staff with particular packages and the advice printed in the work book.

The map indicates both the level and the point on the course when a skill should be assessed. Suggestions have been made that particular skills be assessed in different modules, although some negotiation is possible. For example, Level III group skills could be formally assessed in a number of different modules, and a decision must be made where this should occur. Staff retain their freedom to set the context in which a skill is developed and assessed.

Where are we Now?

We had nearly completed our model when BTEC issued new guidelines for the resubmission of its courses. Because HND has to be resubmitted to BTEC this year it has been necessary to reformulate our skills map to fit different modules and areas of knowledge. The changes have made it impossible for us to start the validation of the model, although our survey of past students has made some contribution to the process. Full validation of the model can only take place when it is put into practice on the programme, for only then will we be able to examine the extent to which essential business skills are being developed. At a later date we would also like to survey and assess the extent to which students can transfer skills into business, although we are only too painfully aware that its level of evaluation is far from an exact science.

In the meantime, we believe that we have developed a logical and coherent framework which will assist colleagues who are faced with the difficulties of teaching skills. So far our discussions have helped the development of our BTEC course, and staff who teach other programmes have expressed interest in adapting the model to the needs of their courses.

The Future

The emphasis of our work has been on pragmatic problem solving. The fact that our findings on the nature of business skills resembles the categories produced by other organisations (see BTEC), leads us to believe that our identification of skill categories is sensible and valid in terms of the educational objectives of our course. Our representation of skills levels and the emphasis we have placed on transferability from study skills has not yet been validated, but it is an example of the type of thinking which we believe is required by educationalists at the present time.

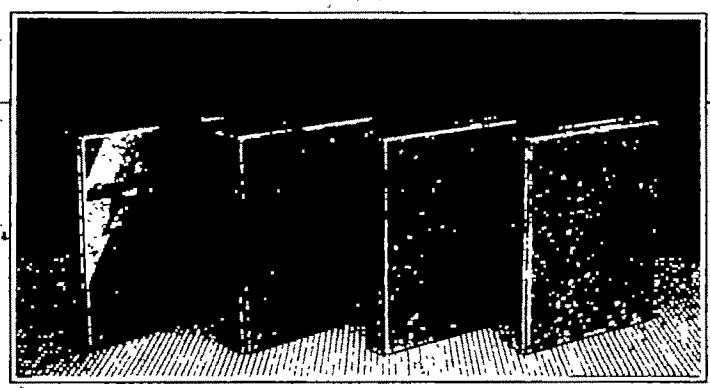
The past six years have seen the evolution of new aims for all levels of education. The changed aims reflect the need to adapt to a different economic and social environment — a need which is not unique to the UK but is shared by most of Europe. As we have experienced higher levels of unemployment, so we have seen an increased emphasis being placed on vocational education and the teaching of skills. However, while educationalists have devoted years to attempting to structure the acquisition of knowledge, rather less attention has been given to the appropriate sequencing of skills.

If we are to develop and teach young people properly we must surely pay more attention to the correct structuring of a skills curriculum. If our scheme, or an improved modification of it, can be validated, we would have a method of identifying the levels of skills involved on different education programmes. We do not claim to have complete answers to the many substantive issues, but we hope our work

will contribute ideas on how the problems may be tackled. We would welcome contact with others who are interested and hope this article has enabled us to share our experiences as we are increasingly aware of how much more work needs to be undertaken.

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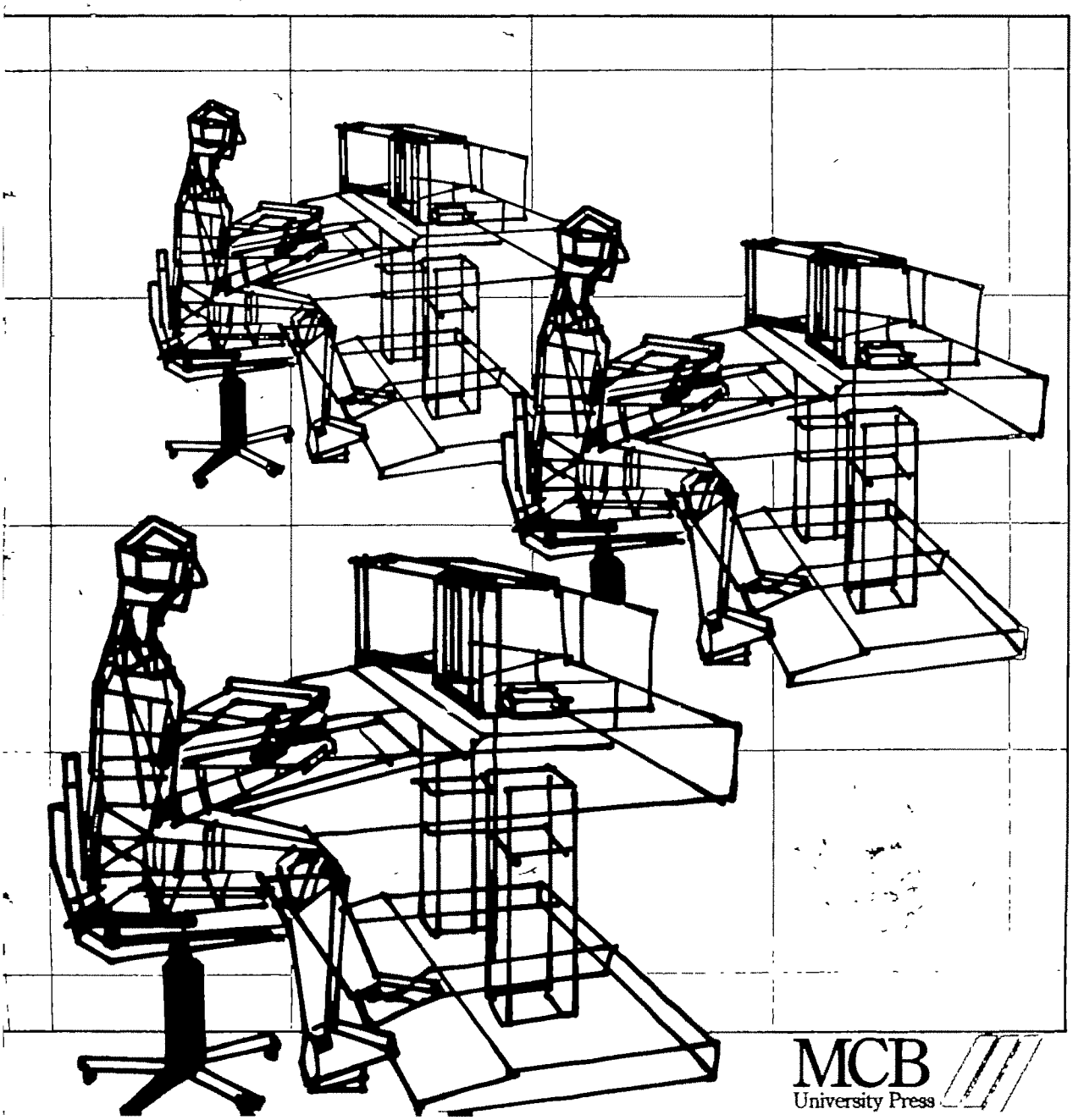
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The Practice of First-Level Management

by John Collyear

usiness Education Volume 9 Number 2 1988



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EDITOR

Barrie O. Pettman

The Practice of First-Level Management

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Abstract and Keywords

2

The Practice of First-Level Management

by John Collyear

Effectiveness, Employees, Managers, Supervisors

The job of the first-level manager (FLM) is one of the most exacting and critical in both industry and commerce. Done well, it makes a major contribution to industrial relations and efficiency. Done badly, it is a major cause of conflict and ineffective work. An attitude and understanding are described which can be used by FLMs to improve their position and work contribution, which it is suggested, makes it easier for the subordinates under their responsibility to function efficiently and well, while enabling the FLMs, themselves, to grasp an overview of their role and the intricacies of carrying it out successfully.

Foreword

The job of management is to produce excellent results from ordinary people. Too often, management is tempted to try and find extraordinary people, which is fine in so far as it is reasonably possible, but most of our employees are average people. The real skill is in making their performance outstanding over a substantial period. This book is designed to help first-level managers achieve that objective.

It is also tempting for managers to look to the apparent advantages of new investment but, in most companies, the real priority is the effective use of existing investments, facilities and methods. If existing resources are not used to the full, there can be no confidence that new resources will be used any more effectively. Excessive preoccupation with new investment often only delays action to solve the immediate difficulties by giving the feeling that solutions to the problems are on the way with the new investment. Effective first-level managers are the key to good utilisation of existing resources. When this occurs, it helps make possible and desirable the consideration of new investment.

When new investment is put in hand, it is often the effective first-level manager who sees that the plans are well thought out in detail; who does all those day-to-day actions that achieve the programme; who resolutely tackles all the snags that inevitably occur, and thus makes the new investment really pay off.

It is 12 years since this was first published, but the simple message that I wanted to get across to first-level managers seems to me as relevant today as it was then. Much has changed during that period in terms of the relationship between trade unions and management and improved industrial performance and competitiveness. The new climate has certainly given a tremendous boost to improved productivity in all forms of working life. However, the opportunity and need for management is still great. There is a danger that first-level managers will behave autocratically because their subordinates do not have the power to resist. The real challenge is to use the new freedom to exercise leadership and management skills in a civilised way.

For the sake of ease of reading and expression I have used the masculine pronoun "he" throughout, whilst referring to both male and female managers and staff.

I would like to thank all the many people who have helped me and, in particular, MD, LB, AEC and EJ.

John Collyear
April 1988

The Practice of First-Level Management

by
John Collyear

1. Introduction

This book is about the first-level manager, referred to from now on as FLM; it is used in this work to describe that level of management which is in direct control of work people on the shop floor, in an office or retail outlet. Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted title or job description which can embrace the particular roles in mind, but titles like foreman, chargehand, supervisor, superintendent, section manager, leading hand, section leader, office manager may, in some circumstances, be expected to be types of FLM. One of the problems in discussing the work of FLMs is that, all too frequently, their limits of authority and resources are ill-defined, and in one company, a chargehand will have far more authority than a foreman or superintendent in another. In order, therefore, to avoid these confusing titles, the abbreviation FLM is meant to apply to the level of managers on a shop floor, in an office or retail outlet who do not have subordinate managers working for them, but who have the authority and accountability to allocate work and make decisions about the acceptability and the future of the people working for them and for whose work they are accountable.

Ideally, the FLMs should be in a position to know precisely the state of their accountability; frequently they do not. They should also know the extent of the authority that goes with accountability; frequently they do not. If there is lack of clarity in these areas, then, obviously the FLMs should seek clarification. However, this may involve pointing out the potential problems arising from the lack of clarity so that senior management tries to bring greater precision to the position of the FLM.

However, the principles and practices recommended here are not without value, even if the position on these matters is confused, and FLMs who are in a position of uncertainty should not despair and read no further; in fact, they can learn much from applying practices which, whilst lacking formal recognition, will probably rest easily with many, if not most, of the people with whom and for whom they work. This is because, as a society, we would feel entitled to expect reasonable and firm behaviour from a manager and would accept it. As long as FLMs work within their understanding, they will have few problems. If this understanding is defined so that they and the people who work for them have the same understanding and acceptance, there will be fewer problems about their limits of authority.

If we consider the manager-subordinate relationship in a hierarchical managerial structure, although the authority must rest on the consent of the subordinates collectively, there are certain characteristics that each one of us, at whatever level, expect from our manager. All managers would be wise to assume that these characteristics exist even if they are only latent, and even if, to some extent at times, they appear to be denied.

Requirements for a Good Manager-subordinate Relationship

Assume, therefore, that all people working for other people in a manager-subordinate relationship believe:

(1) They know what work they have to do and by when they have to complete it.
(2) They get praised for good work.
(3) They get criticised for poor work.
(4) Managers really do intend to see that the company is given a fair day's work whilst, at the same time, they are equally concerned to see a fair day's pay is provided.
(5) There is rigour in seeking good attendance and timekeeping.
(6) Fair warning is given of inadequate performance.
(7) There are reasonable and fair opportunities to advance within the capacity of individuals.
(8) The people who represent them, whether they be in a trade union or not, are provided with adequate facilities.
(9) There are grievance procedures and no subtle impediments to using them.
(10) Sufficient priority is given to rectifying inadequate working conditions.
(11) Time is made available to provide explanations about the objectives and performance of the unit and wider area and to encourage contributions about future objectives.
(12) The opportunity exists to make suggestions about work improvement and, if these are good, to have them recognised and implemented.
(13) In general terms, there exists a civil and polite and, even better, a friendly working environment.
(14) By and large, each person has a reasonably steady income.
(15) The policies of the company and area are such as to give reasonable security and future employment opportunity to the extent that this is possible.
(16) Managers are fair and base their judgements about people only on their work performance.
(17) Each person is expected and encouraged to be self-supervising.
(18) Each person has a chance to feel that his own individual performance is recognised and rewarded.
(19) Each person is told something about the wider aspects of the work of the FLM and the company.
(20) Promotion is on merit and the needs of the company and on no other criteria.
(21) Working with due care and co-operatively is recognised as being of value.
(22) There is sympathy in accepting the consequences of domestic emergencies.
(23) There are opportunities to discuss the programming and methods of working.

(24) Top management set the example of behaving with integrity, with concern for the present and with plans for the future, and with a balanced view between the entitlements of employees, shareholders and customers.

(25) Managers, whilst rigorous in seeing that the company gets a fair effort from employees, are also determined to ensure that the entitlements of their subordinates are protected.

(26) The company's policy or its customs and practices seek to avoid imposing hardship or injustice on its employees.

Regardless of the formal structure in a company, if FLMs can have these objectives in their minds and work towards achieving them, this can do nothing but good in terms of improving the operation of which they are a part — be it a manufacturing firm, a bank, a department store or an insurance company. The subsequent sections in this book are devoted to examining in detail how these objectives can be implemented. Each FLM reading this book will have to accept that some parts of it may be more applicable than others, depending on the particular constraints and opportunities that exist in his own company.

The Role of the FLM

The job of the FLM is one of the most exacting and critical in both industry and commerce. Done well, it makes a giant contribution to industrial relations and efficiency. Done badly, it is a major cause of conflict and ineffective work. The FLM in a large company probably wishes to feel part of the management, but many things happen to make him doubt this. Frequently, the FLM feels ill-informed (shop stewards may know things before he does). Frequently, he feels sacrificed as a scapegoat in the middle of conflict. If he tries to take a stand, he feels that he may not be supported; and feels blamed for all the ills — bad quality, bad service, high cost, low morale, etc. One of the first things necessary to be a successful FLM is to combine determination to introduce change and yet practise stoicism about many things. It is often just not physically possible to keep FLMs well informed promptly, although this does not mean that one should not continue to try.

The FLM's subordinates are not themselves managers and therefore, have not, through experience, a tolerance of the difficulties of a management role. This certainly adds to an FLM's problems. Furthermore, the FLM is likely to encounter, on a continuous basis, the best organised and strongest representative bodies of the company's employees.

Despite all these problems and difficulties, everybody knows from their own experience in industry and commerce that there are individuals occupying roles as FLMs who are outstanding, who achieve things that others could not, who achieve a performance with their resources that is far in excess of others, whose rigour becomes legendary, and yet they are regarded with affection by those who work for them. It is all too easy to put these attributes down to the simple quality of "leadership". What these people often have done is to use their latent ability in the common sense of getting other people to work in an environment in which they flourish, irrespective of the extent to which the total institution of which they are a part has formalised or accepted it.

The Aim of this Book

The main objective of this work is to put forward an attitude and understanding that FLMs can use which will improve their position and work contribution, even if their position is less clear than is desirable. Where the position of the FLM is clear, at least in some aspects, then he must interpret the approach in this work against the background of his own "company-defined" authority.

This book does not include all the aspects of a manager's job; it does not deal with techniques (e.g. work study, job evaluation, production control, etc.) as such. It concentrates on the man-manager relationship, particularly the difficult parts. Many FLMs reading this may be concerned to feel that what actually happens in their area is so different from the standards described here as to believe it is not worth trying to improve. This should be looked at as an opportunity. If things are bad, then all the more scope for improvement. All an FLM can do is to keep working at the situation even if it takes a long time to make any noticeable difference. Above all, he must keep on trying to improve, despite the difficulties.

The fact that the book concentrates on FLMs should not be taken to imply that more senior managers deal with the aspects described more effectively. Generally, all managers have difficulties in dealing resolutely, fairly and effectively with the subjects discussed.

In attempting to set standards for management performance, much emphasis is placed on work and the importance of the FLM in seeing that work is done. This should not imply at any time that FLMs should not try to be pleasant, humanely motivated people. On the contrary, there is no reason to assume that work at any level cannot be satisfying, and managerial attitude is the major factor affecting this.

Other levels of management can, therefore, read this book with relevance, not only to consider its use in developing their own FLMs, but in their own management behaviour.

2. Your Appointment

The Feelings that Everybody Faces

When you are first appointed as an FLM you will experience the need to make a mental shift in attitudes. This will be difficult and especially so if you are appointed to be the FLM of people who were previously your colleagues. Some will be your friends; some will be older than you; some more experienced; some more skilled; some may be disappointed applicants for the job you have just got. You may experience feelings of guilt and of changed loyalties. This is a problem that everybody faces.

Take comfort from the fact that, in time, everybody readjusts. Consider the problem in relation to yourself. Are there people in your new command with whom you were particularly friendly? If so, do not suddenly turn cool to them; on the other hand, be especially careful not to give them any favoured treatment. Are there people with whom you are not on the best of terms? If so, go out of your way to be considerate, but not so excessively as to be counter-productive. Are there people who are more skilled or experienced in a particular aspect? If so,

show you recognise, respect and value it; do not attempt to be an expert on everything.

As a manager, your relationships must become based on work — good work, bad work, skilled work, fast work, difficult work, easy work. You may have other relationships, e.g. on the bowling green, etc. Keep them separate in your mind. It is not easy — in fact, it is impossible to do this perfectly, but it helps to see it this way. You have an especially difficult problem if you were one of the representatives of those you now manage. You may have worried about this so much as to have almost not accepted the job. You will feel guilty, like the proverbial "poacher turned gamekeeper". This feeling is absolutely normal. It helps if you see your appointment as an opportunity to be a leader of the group in a different way from before. You must not exploit the knowledge you had in your previous representative role, except in such a way that enables you to be more effective as a manager in dealing with representative matters. You will find that, as a manager with authority, you have to speak more circumspectly than you did as a representative.

You do not, on the day of your appointment, become a "superior person". You become someone who has a different and more responsible job with certain authority as regards your subordinates — no more and no less. Do not try to pretend that things have not changed. They have — because your work has changed.

How the Others will React

There will always be those who would have liked your job and believe they are better qualified. They will decide that your appointment was bad judgement, nepotism or favouritism. Expect this. Do not take any special action, except to remember that such people are likely to be especially skilled or experienced and hence valuable to you.

Rather like being promoted from being a representative, your position will be difficult if you are a relative of a more senior manager. In this instance, regrettably, many will assume nepotism and you will have to be better than others to have a chance of being assessed on your own merits. This is tough, but a fact. You can help by never alluding to, or using, your family relationship in a work context.

Whatever the circumstances, that first day in the office, store or factory will be tough. Especially the first time you walk out of your office. Eyes will be on you — you will be apprehensive. Do not worry too much; it is the same for all new managers. Be natural — follow your instincts. If you want to wear a new suit or dress, then do — if you do not, then do not.

Give yourself a little time to assess the real priorities in any changes you wish to make. Do not be pressured into moving too quickly, but recognise that, when a new manager comes on the scene, people will expect some changes and be ready for them. This readiness will reduce as time goes by.

Try to have a word with everybody as soon as possible. Introduce yourself to anybody you do not know; the initiative is yours. People will imagine what you are like if they do not know you. The image will always be worse than their opinion of you when they do know you. It might be a good idea if you get them together in a group or groups, perhaps after a few days, as well as meeting them individually,

to give them your first impressions. You will be very tempted to shirk this, but make yourself do it. It will be the first of many times that you will have to force yourself to do things that you would rather not do. Every time you overcome your hesitancy, you make it easier for the next time. Every time you shirk, the more difficult will it be to have courage next time. Do not let yourself escape. You will find real satisfaction in overcoming fears, most of which are illusions anyway.

3. Managerial Authority

Accountability

In many companies, at the level of the FLM, managerial authority is blurred. In effect, managerial authority is accorded explicity or implicitly by the directors, and tolerated by the employees, in connection with the giving of instructions about the carrying out of work. The more that this toleration is specifically and overtly authorised, the better; but we must accept that managerial authority is seldom spelt out in detail. It is usual to find that the *accountability* of FLMs for achieving work to quality and cost or standards of service is less in doubt than their *authority*. This creates the unsatisfactory position where the FLM is more accountable than authorised. The benefit from this book, hopefully, will be improvement even against a background of ill-defined authority.

Ask yourself the following questions. Are you, as an FLM, accountable for proposing:

(1) Selection and dismissal?

(2) Promotion?

(3) Reward, disciplining?

Assume that you are, unless it is defined that you are not. Let us also assume that there is, either explicitly or implicitly, some means whereby ill-judged decisions about people which you may make (and we all do this from time to time) can be subject to review, review which takes place while the people involved are working rather than standing outside the factory gates or office doors.

Rights

Management also have certain rights, most of which will be usually accepted, as follows:

(1) The right to know how a worker, working for a manager, spends his working time.

(2) The right to expect that a worker can be employed, utilising the skills for which he is being paid, all the time (within reason and with suitable allowances for fatigue, etc).

(3) The right to expect that the worker will be prepared to work for a period on other activities than that for which he is normally employed, providing that he does not suffer in pay and that he can perform the work with safety.

This third right may, in many industries and locations, be contentious. Nevertheless, it is a factor which should be sought for continuously and relentlessly.

The Logical Answer

Authority is a strange thing, and most of us resent it. However, most of us respond co-operatively to the logic of a given situation. The less you need to rely on your authority and the more you rely on your own ability to demonstrate the sense of a given course of action, the more successful you will be.

4. Safety

Your Rules as an FLM

The hackneyed phrase "Safety First" should really mean just that. Do not compromise. Either safety rules are followed or they are not. You must see that they are. Set the example. If protective clothing or glasses are required (or even desirable), always wear them. Help others, including your manager, to see that they, too, must set the example. So many of us feel that the rules are for others.

Extend your feeling of accountability outside your own area. If you see something unsafe, stop it immediately yourself if it is of a gross and immediate nature. If it is not urgent, see your colleague manager. Welcome similar action from your colleagues in your area — not only from your colleagues, but from all, including representatives.

Make sure you have identified the special local safety requirements in so far as they may differ from the general requirements. You may be more limited in what you can do in your area. If you have fully understood the rules, do all the people who work for you know what they are? Are they clearly displayed? Can they realistically be followed? For example, there is no point in having a rule which says safety helmets with visors must be worn if the condition of visors is such that a man cannot see through them to do his work.

Be aware that people who become experts over many years can also become blasé about safety requirements, so be firm. Watch out for routine fire drills — see that they are held properly and that fire equipment is properly maintained and kept available. Look out for speeding in the car park and the jagged edge of a staircase handrail. See that gangways and fire exits are clear. Do not leave the corrective work to others. Remember that we all resent the discipline; expect it. Do not let it deter you. Let it challenge your skill as a manager to achieve results by using your position to encourage and persuade and to gain willing co-operation rather than having to issue orders. But be prepared to issue orders if this is necessary; there is a limit to how much time you can spend just persuading.

5. Setting and Maintaining the Working Pace

Man-paced and Process-based

One of the prime responsibilities of FLMs is setting the working pace of people who work for them. This working pace must be achieved with the acceptance of the FLM's subordinates. It is up to the FLM to set a good pace and use his



skills to gain co-operation in this. One is always conscious, when walking through an office, store or workshop, whether or not the working pace is tuned, and this tuning will vary according to the circumstances. For continuous processes, one accepts that people are very often inactive while things are right, and that they are required to expend a lot of energy only when things go wrong or when a change is needed. With man-paced processes, one looks to see continuance of working rather than extreme energy. Nobody can work at a great rate continuously, and one hopes that, in a man-paced activity (such as word processing, deburring or polishing), there will be a good steady level of effort without too many stoppages. In man-paced areas, one is conscious, if a department is working well, of a steady and level activity without groups of people chatting and breaking up when a senior manager approaches. In a process-based activity, one is conscious either of production going along smoothly or of stoppages where people are employed at a very high level of activity for a comparatively short time.

In general terms you, as an FLM, have a more difficult task in the man-paced processes, since these often require continuous exertion of physical effort or ongoing concentration for their completion. When a man or woman stops what they are doing, the work stops. With continuous process, when the process stops, the employee starts. In the first instance, you have to ensure that all the facilities you can command are put at the disposal of the machine operative or office worker, in order to see that nothing distracts the employee from his ability to continue effective working. This includes the need to recover from fatigue, but even this can be achieved by variations in the type of work. In process-type work, you need to see that everything is available to ensure that nothing stops the process working and, should it stop, that everything is organised to get it restarted as soon as possible. Your job as an FLM relates, first, to setting the work environment and secondly, to using your skills to organise the facilities to deal with the impediments to the continuation of work.

This subject is one of the most important areas of the accountability of the FLM. Whilst, as we will consider in later sections, you should so organise your command that you do not need to apply constant supervision in order for work to proceed, you must, nevertheless, practise constant vigilance to ensure that all the difficulties that crop up are dealt with rapidly and that work continues steadily.

6. Assessing Capability

Hardware and Human

As an FLM, you have certain work objectives to achieve and you have certain resources in the form of equipment and people assigned to you for the purpose of getting this work done. Normally, you will find no difficulty in assessing the capability of the hardware which is assigned to you, whether it be production machines or data processing equipment. You will readily indicate when certain equipment is below standard and needs replacement or repair. You will readily recognise that certain types of equipment have persistent defects, and you will certainly keep your own superior manager well informed of the state of this equipment and will take action yourself to improve it or recommend that some action be taken which is outside your own authority.

When it comes to assessing your human resources, the situation becomes immediately much more complex, in that the opinions you hold will be much less certain, will not be easily corroborated and may, in some instances, imply taking actions which, in themselves can be distressing. Nevertheless, it is part of your accountability to take a long cool look, from time to time, at the quality and ability of the people who work for you and for whose work you are accountable. If you move into a new job, you take the same action, but, here, you are faced with acquiring knowledge over a period of time and forming a view as this knowledge expands. When you have been in a job for a long time, to take a cool and independent look, untrammelled by the habits you have got into, may be exceedingly difficult. Nevertheless, it is very important that, from time to time, you do this. In doing so, it is also exceedingly important that you make clear to yourself that you are not going to let the formulation of opinion be affected by the action you might have to take if this opinion is something that becomes overt.

List Attributes

In order to effect a good discipline on your self in this, it is worthwhile listing the attributes you would like to consider in this review of your human resources. These could include such things as:

- co-operation;
- skill;
- flexibility;
- timekeeping;
- quality performance;
- self-supervisory characteristics;
- promotion potential;
- initiative;
- contribution to real results, and
- pace of work.

There may be others you would like to emphasise. At the end, ask yourself and give an honest answer to the question: what would my reaction be if this individual informed me that he was going to leave in a week's time? Would you be:

(a) Disappointed?
(b) Indifferent?
(c) Pleased?

It is very important to stress the great value that can be gained by writing down even brief notes concerning this analysis, and to be on guard against your own instinctive reaction that may steer you away from answers that will force you to conclude that a difficult course of action is necessary.

Identify Bias

It is also worth identifying another distorting factor that comes into making assessments. This is the natural tendency that we all have to be more tolerant

towards those we have selected ourselves, compared with those who were selected by our predecessors or who were "transferred" to us without much enthusiasm on our own part. In carrying out this assessment, it is most important to set aside the biasing effect that this can have. One of the difficulties is that when we criticise the performance of somebody we ourselves chose, we are criticising our judgement of choice. When we think well of them, we are reinforcing the quality of our judgement. No such bias comes into the assessment of people selected by others. Indeed, if the person doing the selecting is somebody of whom we hold a low opinion, we may have a bias of another nature in our assessment.

People we have chosen ourselves are likely to be those people with whom we have a comparatively easy rapport. People chosen by others may not have this characteristic. The effects that people have on each other because of their personalities are important, but they should not be allowed to dominate too much the relationship between a person and his subordinate or manager, and managers must learn to tolerate effective people with whom they do not find themselves intuitively in sympathy.

Finally, remember that it is work capability only that you are assessing. Make no allowance for, and do not be affected by, other qualities, and also ignore sex, race, colour and religion. Do not discriminate against, nor discriminate for, in order to avoid the accusation of discrimination against. Assess only work performance within your company's policy.

7. Recognising and Acting on Strengths and Weaknesses

Exploiting Strengths

Do not neglect conscious appreciation of strengths; this means recognising the things that people who work for you are good at and then trying to utilise these as much and as frequently as possible. Nevertheless, when there is a willingness to do inconvenient or awkward things or work at awkward times, clearly there is a limit to how much this resource can be drawn on without affecting its availability. Complementary to this is the process of reviewing the performance of each individual and deciding his weaknesses, deciding how serious those weaknesses are, and deciding what action to take.

Tackling Weaknesses

Where the weakness is a motivational one and is not associated with work skill or work knowledge, this can only really be tackled by an objective talk between you and your subordinate. It might be that you are of the opinion that the subordinate too frequently engages in conversation and is not working sufficiently continuously. It may be that you regard the pace of work as inadequate. This particular type of weakness is one of the most difficult to deal with, in that you may find yourself avoiding taking up the issue or speaking around the subject, without being straightforward.

This is not an unusual characteristic. Indeed, the manager who enjoys the type of discussion referred to is usually a most unpleasant character to work for, and most sensitive people find initiation of a discussion on subjects concerning

motivation and effectiveness psychologically difficult to instigate and to carry out in a fair, straightforward and unembarrassed way. Nevertheless, anybody who accepts the role of manager takes upon himself the accountability for conducting such reviews, and the consequences of them. If the conversation is concentrated on the subject of work and not on the person, this will help a great deal.

Where a weakness exists as the result of inadequate skill or job knowledge, it is much easier to deal with, and requires some form of decision about training or education. It will help you as an FLM if you have in mind the objective you want to reach and the period of time over which you would like to reach it. It will also help if you decide whether the improvements are mandatory or only desirable. If they are mandatory, the conversation with the subordinate will have to indicate clearly that you regard the greater skill or job knowledge as a matter of importance, and that failure to achieve the higher standard will be regarded as serious. If it is, then say so, and just exactly what "serious" means. It could be, however, that the improvements are not essential for you to get your work done, because you may be able to find solutions in other ways. It is also important for you to indicate whether or not the training is necessary in order to make the subordinate worth his current level of pay or whether you feel that after he has successfully undergone the training and achieved a new work capability, this may result in a higher level of pay. (Make sure you can and will implement this before you promise it.) This, again, needs to be stated clearly and unequivocally.

After you have identified areas of weakness or areas that require improvement, it is important for you to follow up regularly and review progress or lack of it. As the new skills, which you initiated and presumably require, become developed, it is important that they are used by you to help you to get your work done.

The discipline of writing down explicitly the strengths and weaknesses of each individual (and everyone will have some) is worthwhile, and can be part of the background against which a general discussion about work performance between you and individual subordinates can be conducted. If a person has strengths and is good at certain things, it is as well that he knows that you recognise this characteristic; do not just concentrate on the weaknesses.

8. Self-supervision

A Very Important Subject

In previous sections reference has been made from time to time to the attribute "self-supervision". This is such an important subject that it warrants the space to be explored more fully.

The great majority of managers, if asked if it is necessary for their own manager to watch over them to see that they continue working throughout the day, would regard the question as impertinent and an insult to their working integrity. Yet most management organisations, as far as FLMs are concerned, are designed on the assumption that the people who work for them will seek every opportunity to avoid working. A manager who expects this situation will quite frequently get it because we all tend to react unfavourably to being treated as if we are irresponsible and very often develop such characteristics as a reaction to our manager's attitude.

If you, as an FLM, feel that you need to spend a high proportion of your time seeing that people do not stop working for motivational reasons, you will have an extremely hard and stressful life and your relationships will be fraught with friction. If, on the other hand, you are determined to establish a working group in which it is known that you regard it as mandatory for each person to work at a fair pace with care, diligence and continuity, you will then put yourself in the position of being able to devote your time to work planning and generally clearing the impediments that prevent you, and the people who work for you, from getting your work done.

This does not free you from the need to do spot-checks on the activity level to ensure that stoppages have not occurred, and, if they have, for what reason. You should aim to have a position whereby all the people who work for you are under no illusion that it is their responsibility to see that they continue working and that, if there is any impediment to working effectively, this is reported promptly to you. Further, if the action you take does not have the result they knew you intended, this, again, should be repeatedly reported.

Of course, it is very convenient if you inform each subordinate on the quality and specification of the work you want done each day to meet your own programme. In practice, it is not always possible for you to do this except in certain types of work. For example, on an assembly line, you will know the rate of the line and can therefore specify the quantity you expect in a given period of time. With maintenance work, it is obviously less easy to be precise because you cannot be sure how long a job will take. You will, however, normally have an instinctive awareness of whether or not a fair day's work has been completed. If you find that there is a shortcoming in this respect, you should investigate it and try to find whether this feeling is accurate and, if so, find out the underlying reasons. Equally, you should be on the lookout for an unusually good performance and take special notice of this and see that it is known that you have noticed it. Remember that, whilst it is easy to over-assess the output that should be achieved in a given time, you should not set slack standards — those which require no real effort to achieve.

The Need to Develop an Attitude

If you can develop self-supervision amongst the people who work for you, you will normally have no problems when you are required to attend meetings or visit other parts of the organisation, and you should really regard any repeated failure of an individual to be self-supervising as so serious as to warrant possible termination. If you once allow one or a few people to depart from a high standard in this respect, the effect across the totality will be contagious.

In effect, imagine yourself saying to your subordinates newly started, something like the following: "I assume that you are a sensible and mature person and do not wish to have me on your back all day in order to see that you work reasonably well. In order to achieve this, I expect that you will take the responsibility of seeing that you get here at the right time, ready for work at the right time, and do not finish prior to the finishing time, and that you work steadily and carefully throughout the whole of the time for which you are supposed to be at work. Do not get involved

in conversations with other people on matters not associated with your work. I expect you to raise with me any difficulties you encounter which prevent your working to the full, or utilising your time to the full, and I expect you to keep me informed about the quality of the work that you are producing if it is falling below that which is expected. I also expect you to be on the lookout to see whether or not the way in which you work can be improved, so that a greater output can be achieved without the expenditure of greater effort. I shall, of course, observe from time to time how you are proceeding, and if I find that you seem unable to work without continuous reminders of the need to be at the job at the right time and work steadily throughout the day, then it will not be possible for us to continue to work together."

9. Selection

Present Decisions Affect Future Conditions

Look around the people in the company or organisation in which you work at present. Each one, at some time or other, was chosen by a manager to be suitable to work in the company. It is quite clear that some of these choices are now far from ideal. The decisions that you and your colleagues make over the next few years will determine the quality of people in the company or organisation in the years to come. And, of course, the greater the job security, the more significance the decision will have.

The number one rule in selecting immediate subordinates is never to delegate this decision to somebody else. If you are on holiday, or ill, or if you are visiting some other part of the organisation, it might be tempting to allow your deputy to make the decision for you. Always resist it. One bad or marginally bad decision made in this way can cause you hours, weeks and even years of problems later.

Pay great attention to first impressions; it is quite possible for you to decide in a matter of minutes whether a person is a "possible" or not. The human brain is very competent at sizing up a tremendous variety of characteristics about another individual, and if, instinctively, you feel that the person concerned is not the one for you, then you go against this judgement at great risk. The risk is tempting when you are short of people and find them difficult to get, and when the skills of the individual concerned would appear to be adequate. If, however, an adequately skilled person does not fit into the way in which the group you have working for you works, the effect of accepting an incompatible individual can be most unproductive. Do not feel that because, sometimes, it is most difficult to put such assessments into words, that their value is small. Clearly, it is better if you can express it when discussing it with a colleague or a manager, but, in the end, do not go against your better judgement in this respect.

Second Opinions

Be quite prepared to take a second opinion from a colleague or assistant, particularly when assessing skills and judging the validity of experience. Remember that you must ensure that individuals selected by you will have the right attitude to work, that is, the attitude to work that you wish and which you have engendered in the

rest of your command. No matter how the skills of the individual concerned compare with your requirements, if the attitude is not in harmony, do not take the risk.

Remember, that you know more about the requirements of the job than the applicant, and that the applicant knows more about himself than you do. The process of selection is for you to get to know about the applicant and for the applicant to get to know about the job. Do not neglect the fact that it is necessary for the applicant to form his own opinion as to his suitability to get the work done, and that part of the selection process must be to ensure that he gets as good a knowledge of what you expect and how the work environment operates as is necessary for him to be able to answer carefully the question which you ought to put, i.e. "Do you think you can do the job and work in the way I have described?" To help your choice, get him to talk freely and encourage him to ask questions.

Probationary Spell

When making an offer of employment, you should make it a probationary one, making it clear that the situation will be reviewed jointly after a specific period of time, after which the appointment will either be confirmed or terminated. It is almost always worthwhile asking for references which can be checked before the end of the probationary period. Remember to use this probationary period effectively. Make sure you keep a careful eye on the individual to see how he is developing, keeping him informed of your opinion of him; you will certainly be justly regarded as unfair if, at the end of the probationary period, you tell him that he is not satisfactory, and this is the first he has heard about it.

Try to have in your mind, before you fill the role, the extent to which you wish to have somebody with potential to develop to other roles. Remember that in every organisation a mixture of individuals must be brought in who are capable of moving to a higher level of work, perhaps requiring more experience. If you fill your command with people who will be only satisfactory for the work for which they are originally engaged, you will not have material which is suitable for potential promotion. If, on the other hand, you bring in people with too much ambition and potential, you will have so much dynamism in your command that you will lack the experience and stability for coping with the day-to-day work. It is essential to keep a balance in this respect.

Your own manager will have views on the way in which he wishes a vacancy to be filled as far as promotion prospects are concerned, and it is as well to have a discussion with him on this explicit part of the recruitment procedure. It may well be that he will wish to see people you select before they are offered a job, and this can be so that he can ensure that there are sufficient individuals of quality coming into his own larger requirements.

The Role of the Personnel Department

There will probably be a personnel department connected with the screening and attracting of recruits. Do not leave too much to them. Do not assume that the people they send to you are suitable. Set a high standard, and if the people they

send are unsuitable in any significant way, make clear to them the way in which the applicants fall down so that they may begin to collect a more useful range of people.

In connection with the potential and training possibilities that exist in the job you are trying to fill, it will be of great help if you try to identify the transit time you expect the individual you are trying to recruit will stay in the job concerned. If you are expecting only a short time, say, one year, you will get a different type of person from somebody you want to stay in the job for, say, five years. When interviewing, also form an estimate of the transit time potential of the applicant.

Most companies have some form of internal appointments procedure whereby individuals from within the company or organisation are given the opportunity of seeking a change in their own position. You should be continuously on the alert for people within your own command who can be developed to move into a higher role and thus improve their own prospects.

There are certain roles which are always difficult to fill and very often only best filled by a transfer from inside the company or organisation. It is very important that the roles from which they are transferred are identified as being training roles, in the sense that one should only fill them with people who are capable of moving on to the role which is difficult to fill. If one fills them with individuals without potential, one will be blocking off the opportunity of using the training role as a source of recruitment for the difficult role.

Do not be shy about enquiring about a candidate's previous representative activities. After all, you are wanting to get work done. Although your subordinates need representatives and select them, they can normally select from the people you or your predecessors have chosen. It is quite legitimate and necessary for you to take into account a candidate's previous representative history, your group style, and the availability of representative aspirants within the group.

Group Acceptability

Remember, that with closely knit groups, acceptability to the group is most important, and it may be desirable to get a view on this acceptability before appointment. One can, for example, introduce a candidate to one of the group in order to allow the candidate to see the work. This also gives the candidate the opportunity to see how well he will fit in. The smaller and/or the more dependent the group, the more important it is that this factor is given serious consideration.

Before starting a new employee, make it clear to him that you expect him to be flexible. It is worth explaining that you might, for example, want him to do some painting or wash down a wall if there is a shortage of work. This will kill ideas of rigidity at an early stage. Ensure that he knows that you will expect him to do any job within his competence, including working for other managers, and that his attitude to this must be helpful. If you have doubts about him in this respect, explore them before engaging him not after.

If, in your work area, all your subordinates are members of a trade union, and you know that they will take an unco-operative view of anyone who does not conform, then, in the absence of any specific policy, you will be well advised to

inform the candidate of the situation in which he will find himself so that he can consider this before engagement.

Having made a selection, make a good job of personally introducing the new starter to his colleagues. Show him around; arrange good induction training, and let him spend a little time with his future representative.

Finally, if, after all this, you make a mistake, the sooner you recognise it and put it right, the better. The longer you leave it, the more difficult it will be to correct.

10. Training

Not to be Confused with Education

It is useful to work on the assumption that usually not enough training is done in almost all industrial and commercial situations and that you, as a manager, are accountable for seeing that the people who work for you are properly trained. This is not to be confused with education which provides a general background knowledge and is probably organised by someone else in the management structure.

To put training in its proper setting, start from the assumption that you have a job of work to get done and that you have certain physical resources to enable you to get this job done — these may be machine tools, data processors, analytical equipment in a laboratory — and to use these resources, you require people. The people you employ need to have the skills and knowledge to utilise these resources so that, when all is put together, you get the work done that you have to achieve.

It is helpful if you look at each person who works for you and categorise the extent to which each has the skills and knowledge required to get his job of work done. Then separate the skills required from the knowledge. For example, secretarial skills include typing, word processing, good telephone behaviour, ability to work a FAX machine and so on. A secretary's knowledge will include things like which department is responsible for what kind of work, how a manager likes his diary arranged, who is consulted about a particular type of problem, and so on.

Skills are something that probably you may be able to teach unless they are highly specialised or, at least, you can teach the specialisation that your particular company requires and build on the general skills that the individual has acquired in other work places. As far as knowledge is concerned, it is probably quite certain that there will be ways in which things are done in your company which are different from other companies, and specialised jargon is used which will require teaching. In addition, there is the knowledge of company policies on matters that do not relate directly to the job of the individual, but relate to the environment in which he works — for example, the procedure to be used when absent. There are also policies associated with the treatment of such things as enquiries from customers requiring special priority in delivery, which means that an individual working, say, in a sales office, will have to be taught how to respond to matters such as this.

Assessing the True Value of Training

You will probably find that the acquiring of additional skills raises the feeling by individuals that they should receive more pay. If this is the policy that is followed

you can expect that the acquiring of more skills is an objective that many people will seek to further. This is quite satisfactory as far as it goes, providing that the skills which they wish to acquire and develop create a resource which, although it costs you more, is of help in getting your work done in a more effective way. If it does not, you have no case for having more money for increased skills.

In judging whether or not increased skills by individuals, and this includes not only a higher level of skill but the acquisition of additional skills in parallel types of work, are of economic benefit, you will, of course, include the advantage of flexibility and of being able to cope with varieties of capacity shortage caused, for example, by holidays, sickness etc. It may be very desirable to have some proportion of the people who work for you multi-skilled because of the flexibility it gives you, but you do not want everybody to be able to do everything. Therefore, you must calculate carefully just what degree of training is worthwhile. You may also have to take into account that the pay progression of people through certain types of job may be necessary if they are to be retained in certain types of uninteresting work. Taking all of this into account, do not allow yourself to be argued into paying for more skills than your company needs to use.

One of the valuable characteristics that people acquire is experience and it is worthwhile for you to consider whether or not this can only be gained by considerable time in the job, or whether or not there are certain aspects which you could teach or have taught and so shorten the time in which an individual becomes fully effective.

There are a variety of ways in which training can be done. You can do it yourself; you can use the training department in your company if it has one, or you can get outside courses arranged, or you can use other members of your command to assist. Which of these you organise is a matter for judgement, but the method too frequently used with new starters is to place them with somebody already doing a similar job, and expect them to pick it up. Start off by assuming that this is normally not the best way, although it may appear to be the easiest at the time. This is not to say that it is not of value to work with people doing similar jobs in the initial stages, but merely to emphasise that more care in thinking about how the training should be done will almost always pay off.

The Value to You of Undertaking Training

Do not neglect the important part that you yourself can play in organising training and actually giving it to individuals. The setting aside of an hour or two in each week for specific training purposes is always difficult to arrange and to avoid cancelling or postponing but, if it can be followed through, it will be of great benefit both to yourself and the individuals concerned. If you have a training department in your company, discuss with the training staff the particular needs of the individuals you have in your area; it may be that they can develop with you a training package using a variety of sources for training which can be used repeatedly and usefully improved as time goes on. The use of outside courses is best decided by the process of discussing training needs with the training department or your manager.

There are certain professional skills which most companies are not competent to train, except when they themselves happen to be involved in that specialism —

for example, accounting, nursing, etc. In these cases you will, of course, need to obtain fully trained staff — fully trained, that is, in their profession. There will, however, still be things that you will have to teach them about the job in which they are to work and the way in which you wish them to work, and especially about the company.

Use every opportunity you can to turn situations of potential criticism into chances for training. When work is not done as you would wish it to be done, then approach this with a training attitude of mind. Concentrate on seeing that you try to ensure that the next time that particular piece of work is performed, it is carried out in the way that you would wish.

Be receptive to suggestions and offers of training yourself. Consider your own shortcomings, particularly in skills and knowledge; you are bound to have some. Identify them if you can, and try to arrange that you get some suitable training on these subjects. For example, if you have difficulties interviewing potential employees, ask to go on a one-day course on interviewing techniques. Discuss with your own manager a training programme for yourself. Do not wait for him to raise this. Try to see that regularly each year you receive some explicit training. Your skills and knowledge will get dated if you do not.

11. Quality

Quality of Work as Well as of Products

The title of this section will evoke in most people a reference to quality of the product and therefore will relate to the achievement of quality in production. In fact, the majority of the comments made will be set against a background of production quality. However, the real and deeper intention is connected with the quality of work, and if you are involved in work other than production, you should not cease reading at this point, but should continue to read against a background of the ideas being relevant to the quality of work for which you are accountable.

It so happens that, in normal terms, we do not keep statistics about quality of work in things other than production. For example, in a typing centre, we do not normally keep statistics which show the number of times typists "reject" work, i.e. when a typist makes an error, has to change it and retype it; or the number of times when "scrap" occurs, i.e. when the typist prints out a page with errors in it. The same remarks apply to all form filling and data collecting. As those involved in EDP know only too well, a large source of their problems is associated with errors in input data fundamentally caused by bad quality of clerical work. Examples in other fields are all too easy to find. For example, in draughting, it is not uncommon to find that errors are made, sometimes picked up by the checker, sometimes not; a letter can be badly dictated and have to be rewritten; a hospital bed must be remade etc.

This preamble should lead us to a simple quality principle for all managers; it is that you should ensure that you know the quality of work that you expect from your subordinates, that they are informed about this, and that they, and you, are aware of the quality of work which is performed.

It is not easy, in some types of work, to specify the quality required completely and exactly in an all-embracing definition. In these cases, the standards you set will be understood by your subordinates, by your comments from day to day and week to week, and you and they will build up an increasingly accurate perception of the requirements.

Achieving Product Quality

After this preliminary comment to ensure that the notion of quality is not taken too narrowly, the majority of the following comments will be made about the achievement of product quality. As far as customers are concerned they regard the achievement of quality as probably the most important characteristic they expect from a supplier. Without adequate quality, they can achieve nothing with the product purchased, however cheap it is or however promptly it was delivered. Clearly, from the company's point of view, it is essential that a clear understanding exists between the customer and the company of the quality that they both require and regard as mutually acceptable.

Each product process should have as its objective the achievement of a certain stage towards the achievement of final product quality. In many instances, the success of the achievement can be measured after the completion of the production process concerned, in a non-destructive way. In some instances, however, this measurement may not be possible without destroying the product, and it may be necessary, in order to ensure the product is satisfactory. that a process specification is clearly enunciated and is followed precisely.

In most instances, it is necessary for an individual involved in controlling a production process to be able to measure the results he is achieving either directly on the product or, in terms of following a process, within sufficient feed-back time to ensure that, should departure have occurred, an insignificant amount of waste has been incurred. As far as measurement is concerned, it is frequently desirable that those involved in production will require more accurate instruments than those involved in checking. For example, if we take a simple instance of a man machining a 220mm diameter piece of steel on a lathe and requiring to work to a tolerance of plus or minus 0.2mm, it would be desirable that he has the opportunity of measuring just how far he is too large before he takes his final cut. Indeed, if he is on a repetition process, it will be desirable for him to be able to measure how the tool is wearing, thus allowing the part to be slightly bigger as the batch proceeds. From the point of view of inspection, however, a gap gauge of go-no-go limit is adequate to ensure that the parts are within tolerance.

As a general rule of thumb, it can be assumed that it is desirable for the production operator to be able to measure to within a tenth of the tolerance band within which he is required to work. This is not to say it is impossible to work with less precise measurement, but merely that if he is so doing, it will be more difficult for him to maintain the tolerance of the production process without too frequent adjustments because of the uncertainty of his measurement. He will be attempting to work to a closer limit than is actually required.

The real skill in production management is to ensure that quality is manufactured rather than to use inspection as a net at the end of the process to collect

unsatisfactory parts. Quality control is a term frequently used and, to my mind, it is best used to describe a situation where the worker in production is in control of quality, to the extent that he knows the quality he is producing during production or sufficiently soon after production for significant departures to be avoided.

Categories of Quality

If this situation is properly set up, it is quite reasonable for you to expect from your subordinates that all the work they produce will be divided by them into the following categories:

(1) within specification;
(2) outside specification and not recoverable (scrap);
(3) outside specification but with deviations of a trivial nature (candidates for concessions), and
(4) rejects (candidates for re-work since the errors are such that they can probably be corrected and brought within specification).

If the production operative is able to produce the results of his work so divided, your job is to sample check the "within specification" and the scrap, to consider carefully the candidates for concession and decide what action to take regarding the possible rejects.

Naturally, you will be involved in discussion with persons in the company charged with making decisions about quality — in the inspection or quality control function, or from subsequent users of your output, but do not let this take away from you the responsibility of organising your total work area so that you are aware of the quality produced and do not have to be told about it, except in unusual circumstances, by another department. This will require you to set the rather difficult balance in managerial atmosphere which, whilst recognising that scrap is ineffective work, emphasises that concealment of scrap, or bad quality or ignorance of it, is even worse.

Destructive Testing

If you are in charge of processes in which it is difficult to check product quality except by destructive testing, you will need to ensure that the instrumentation necessary for ensuring that the process of following specification is accurately and reliably calibrated, and that a suitable sampling destructive test system is in operation for you to be able to ensure that the operators, working within specification, appear to produce adequate quality in the product. Here, again, you should encourage the situation whereby you hold your subordinates' running processes of such a nature, accountable for reporting to you any departures of the process outside specification and for identifying work which may be suspect because of the departures of the process.

In order to add to the information about quality, customer returns and shortages are the two remaining categories that will be of interest to management. Returns

by customers which are found to be faulty are not only a criticism of the inspection system, but also of the production which made them in the first place.

Shortages are quite commonly experienced in most parts of industry and you should continuously fight to eliminate them. They may be caused by incorrect issuing of material or by incorrect usage of material, or they may be caused by concealment of bad quality or by loss in some other unexplained way. Whatever they are, if they are of significance in percentage terms, they cloud the quality data and must be followed through and eliminated.

As will be seen from the content of this section once again you should place the accountability on your subordinates for knowing the quality of their work and be responsible for reporting to you about the quality of it. You should not tolerate a situation where it appears that it is up to them to get away with as much bad work as they can conceal and for you to discover it as best you can.

Measuring Requirements

As stated earlier, the measuring requirements for inspection are such as to be less demanding than those for production. This is not to say that inspection departments do not have and require, from time to time, much more accurate equipment than is required in production. When this occurs, it is because the inspection or quality control department is exercising its function as the custodian of the company's metrology. In doing this, it is able to check gauges and other measuring equipment, to ensure that the standards of sizes and any other quantitative measuring equipment used by the company are accurate.

A Simple Approach

Wherever the achievement of output to the correct quality seems to be a recurring problem, it is a good idea to ask the following questions:

- Does the operative:
  - — know what he has to do, i.e. the steps in the production process?
  - — know the result he has to achieve, i.e. the specification?
- When does he know:
  - — whether he has done what he should?
  - — whether he has achieved the intended result? (if he does not know until a week after he has completed the work, that does not help him to analyse what might have gone wrong.)

The critical question is: If he has done what he was supposed to do, does this provide the required result? If not, then the problem may lie in the *process capability* (section 12).

Finally, a word about the subject introduced at the beginning. Almost all of what has been said is applicable to all types of work, not just production. It so happens that in the production area the aspect of quality has been highlighted and most work done on it. In fact, there is no reason to assume that the quality of work carried out in other areas is any better, and could be worse, than that in production. To start with, there is normally much less specification of the finished job required, and although scrap or re-working only probably wastes material in the form of

paper, it also wastes a lot of time, and, if not found out, can cause errors of great expense to the company over a period of time.

12. Process Capability

One subject that is often not addressed with sufficient priority is the examination of the capability of the "process". This means answering the question: "Will the process as provided, operated as instructed, produce the result to the required specification?"

For example, you may have a man working on a lathe turning a piece of metal to a certain tolerance. However, the dial on the machine does not actually go down to the small size required and the adjustment is such that the operative has to put a cigarette paper in to get it right, i.e. he has to make an intervention to correct the mismatch between the specification on the one hand, and the process capability, on the other. In this case, the ideal solution would be a screen which displayed the size of the metal as it is being turned to an accuracy well within the limits of the specification so that the operative would know instantaneously whether he was achieving the required specification.

A proper "process capability study" will determine the characteristics of the variability of the process and will isolate a number of variables, attribute them to causes, and make possible a full understanding of the sensitivity of the process. From this will come the possibility of a full statistical analysis of output leading to real control of the process. Not infrequently, it will be found that the process is not capable of producing to the specification without an unreasonable degree of intervention.

The FLM who finds that he has quality problems and suspects that the process capability and the required specification are not compatible should arrange to have the process characterised by means of a proper "process capability study". If the study shows that the process is not "capable", then either the specification should be reviewed or the process changed, or both.

13. Trouble-shooting — Problem Solving

All managers, as part of their everyday experience, come across situations where a particularly serious event occurs which requires them to take immediate action. In a manufacturing operation, it can be a severe machine break down; in a marketing organisation, it can be the sudden and serious disaffection of a major client. In all areas, it can be the breakdown or malfunction of the EDP systems.

In these circumstances, the manager quite rightly drops everything and devotes the utmost priority to the solution of this particular difficulty. There is usually intense activity, with contact with other departments or outside bodies to bring about the corrective action needed. Once this is done, everybody breathes a sigh of relief and work returns to normal.

The subsequent requirement, very often neglected, is a serious study of how such a situation can be prevented from re-occurring. The first and immediate work is called "trouble-shooting". The more serious and long-term work is "problem solving".

It really requires a major act of discipline at all management levels to ensure that the subsequent action of problem solving is really taken up energetically, analytically and conclusively. If done properly, it should not be necessary to do that particular trouble-shoot again. Unfortunately, all too often, once the emergency action has been successfully completed, the follow-up is then forgotten, other work is attended to, and the problem solving aspect of the job is neglected. It is worth remembering that most of the problems of today are a result of the inadequacies of the past and, therefore, the attention to problem solving is really to reduce the extent of trouble-shooting that is required in the future.

In fact, the problem solving is much more difficult than the trouble-shooting, and requires a great deal of persistence and determination, not only to find the appropriate course of action, but also to implement it. As in most things, a disciplined approach is usually the most effective, and this requires a careful listing of trouble-shooting actions that have been taken, together with a programme of work to bring to a satisfactory conclusion the ultimate problem solving in each and every case.

There is another aspect of this approach with regard to less serious, but continuous, problems which are dealt with by palliatives. For example, in a machine shop, you may have a piece of equipment that continuously leaks a little oil. This may be overcome by laying down piles of sawdust which are swept up regularly to ensure that the oil does not create a safety hazard, and by employing adequate shop-floor auxiliary labour. In an office, it may be the late delivery of mail from some internal source which regularly arrives at 11.30am instead of 8.30am. There is a great danger that, in making short-term arrangements to cope with these trivial problems, there is never any serious attempt to prevent them occurring.

Irritations of this kind are more difficult to deal with than the problem solving required after trouble-shooting, since the problems themselves are never particularly serious. Failure to correct this continuing low-level inefficiency is accepting that one will always be incurring expense or providing an inadequate service, and not getting to grips with what is necessary to bring about a corrective, appropriate problem solution.

The solutions again are not easy, and it requires diligence, persistence and drive on the part of the first-level manager (who is usually the person who has to deal with the difficulties) to ensure that appropriate priority is given to the rectification of these types of "trivial" problems.

In all these situations, it is worth the FLM writing down what has happened and identifying (i) the immediate solution and (ii) the ultimate and permanent solution, and making sure that he keeps a list of ultimate solutions which have yet to be brought into effect.

14. Delivery

Always on Time

In almost all companies, there is one department that achieves the completion of its tasks on time with a regularity that is almost never subject to failure. It does this despite last-minute changes to work-load, holidays, sickness, and it does it

against a background of high quality and reliability. This department is the payroll department, and, if you examine the reasons why its performance is so outstanding in this delivery aspect, you will discover that it is not because it has excess resources or that the job is particularly easy; indeed, frequently, it is undermanned and the job can be exceedingly complex, particularly if there are late changes and sudden bonuses to be added in. Often, these occur just prior to holiday periods and have to be achieved with less than the normal working week. Almost certainly the reason why the performance is so immaculate is because the motivation of the payroll department is such that its staff will consider no possibility of not achieving their work objective. Obviously, one cannot use the example too far, since the work is special and normally the raw material (cash) is never inadequate or faulty. Nevertheless, the department is committed to a delivery deadline with high quality. The consequences of failure are obvious to the department's staff.

If one uses this department as an example of what can be done, one is forced to the conclusion that the principal reason for the department's success is its motivation and the determination of the management and of the members of the payroll department never to fail in terms of completion time and quality. If an FLM in any other area can achieve the same attitude, he will probably achieve the same success. It is surprising what ingenuity and extra effort individuals can make to see a work situation through a difficult period, given the proper management and leadership. All too often, managers settle back into a routine of accepting a degree of failure as being normal. Once this happens, continuous slipping is inevitable and the situation frequently regularly gets worse. If the payroll department found itself in the position where the payroll was one day late and it went comparatively unremarked for one or two weeks, it would only be a short step for them to become two days late, and so on.

For work of any kind to be meaningful, it has to be done against the background of a completion time, and all FLMs, in whatever activity, should have a clear understanding of their own objectives as far as completion dates are concerned. They should make these known to the people who work for them and ensure that collectively they set about achieving them, dealing with problems that occur in a resolute and determined way in order to ensure that failure of delivery does not occur.

In most sequential manufacturing processes, failures in one area causing lateness are then compounded in another area, causing greater lateness, so that, as the products proceed through production, each successive FLM is faced with a more difficult task to bring about the satisfactory final delivery. This causes a breakdown in the delivery programme achievement.

Feasible Completion Dates

The first thing that must be set up as an objective for all FLMs is to establish completion times that are potentially feasible and secondly, to ensure that they are always met. Meeting them will, of course, be exceedingly easy if the FLM sets an objective that, in itself, requires no effort to achieve. In most circumstances, this will be unsuitable for the cost and customer requirements, and the FLM will always find himself in a position of having to achieve a completion time that

is only just feasible; indeed, it may be thought to be infeasible. The determination with which he sets about ensuring that the date is met and enthusing his subordinates to achieve the completion dates is a measure of his effectiveness and commitment to the company's reputation for achieving work on time.

The achievement of work objectives to a satisfactory quality is an achievement to time within cost. It applies in all work situations — in purchasing, design, development, selling, production, accounting, personnel. No one is exempt. Your attitude to the completiton of work on time will determine the result. If you too readily accept failure, you will more frequently get it. Remember, too, that the payroll department is rarely asked if it can achieve its programme. It is prepared to tackle any requirement and achieve it on time. Thus, to you, the company's promises should be felt by you as if they were your own. If the company is committed — albeit foolishly — it is up to you to see that the company's reputation is protected.

15. Cost and Expense

What these Words Mean

As an FLM, you will almost certainly be subject to some special instructions with respect to cost and expense. Before examining these in more detail, it is as well to ensure that we have a good understanding of our meaning of these two words. Cost, when it is used in ordinary everyday parlance, can be assumed to mean the amount of money that one has to pay to obtain a certain article or service, and it is usually related to an individual service, article or identifiable group of services and articles. In production units, accountants and management normally use the word "cost" to indicate the amount of money that they judge is needed to be recovered when the generation of a particular product or service occurs, in order to ensure that the operation breaks even. They arrive at this by trying to estimate the quantity of products or services that will be produced in a given period of time. They estimate the total expense that is likely to be incurred during that period, including the material expense. They make a judgement, as best they can, to distribute the expense incurred in the creation of the products and in other company activities, and this then provides a figure that can be called the cost recovery figure for each service or product which is produced.

When the figures used incorporate "standards" of production and materials, the ultimate figures are known as "standard costs" and are used to compare the so-called "actual costs" so that a monitor may be obtained of the extent to which the financial plans are going as anticipated or whether correction is needed. It is a mistake to assume that this use of the word "cost" implies that there is some absoluteness about the cost of a particular product or service when it has been calculated in this way. This lack of absoluteness does not reduce the usefulness of the concept but it is important that the way in which the "costs" are structured is understood, so that erroneous decisions concerning, for example, "cost savings", are not made. As an illustration, if it is thought that a production hour "costs", say, x, saving one hour does not necessarily save x. On the other hand, if this saved hour can be utilised to generate more products or services which can be

sold, then the benefit to the company is indeed x, and perhaps more. As an FLM, it is important that you understand the system that is being used in your company if standard costs are applied and budgets set with standard costs as their data. If you do not properly understand the system that is applied, you are likely to make less than optimum decisions. If the system has not been adequately explained to you, you should ensure that you take steps to have it explained, preferably by the accountants and your own manager. Make sure you understand it and keep having it explained to you until you do understand it. Beware of "cost savings" that reduce the output of saleable products or services. Make sure what the figures really mean.

The use of the word "expense" is usually, in business units, taken to include the total items of individual decisions about expenditure which relate to a particular department or unit. As an FLM, you will have a surprising degree of influence over expense that is incurred, much more than you imagine. In fact, the majority of the expenditure in a company consists of a large number of decisions involving small expenses. One of the great difficulties that an organisation has in controlling expense is that the smallness of the items and the largeness of their number tend to create a quite understandable feeling that a close watch on these small items of expenditure is unlikely to have a useful effect in the company. As an FLM you should take an entirely contrary view, and it is worth pausing and listing some of the decisions which you make, or may make, that affect expenditure. This applies whether you are in an office, a factory or a retail outlet. You can make decisions about expenses probably on some of the following items: the use of electricity, heating, gas, air conditioning equipment, extraction equipment, windows (affecting loss of heat), lighting, closing of doors and avoiding draughts, stationery, post, etc.

Cutting Waste

Waste can occur in so many forms; it is fairly safe to say that you could affect the expenditure in your area favourably by as much as ten per cent and, if all FLMs did the same, this would probably result in a cash generation for the company which could transform its investment possibilities. Consider possible areas of waste: in cutting oil, computer paper, lubricating oil, stationery, telephones, telex, pencils, erasers, petrol, cutting tools, compressed air, fuel, water, copying machines, filing cabinets. And then there is the whole range of other expenses that are due to misuse of resources rather than just careless use; for example, people working in less than effective ways, in the methods they use, in undisciplined absence, in bad timekeeping, in damage to the company's property through the misuse of equipment such as forklift trucks, in badly ground tools, etc. The lists are almost endless.

Because business is an economic activity and is concerned with the generation of wealth, the reduction of expense in the generation of a given amount of wealth must, in itself, be highly beneficial and, therefore, in general terms, one can say that true reduction of expense is something that is always a benefit unless, of course, the reduction is one that involves a reduced activity which, in itself, damages the company. However, the vigilance which should be applied to expense control and elimination of waste requires an attitude from you which is unrelenting.

Do Not Be Mean on Pay

The only aspect which you should not subject to a miserly approach is the amount that is paid to the people who work for you. One should never try to save money by paying less than people are worth. It is far better to pay them slightly more than they may be worth and see that they achieve the results that such payment would justify.

Intimately connected with this subject is the use of work study and the achievement of productivity. It is very difficult to define productivity, although most of us know what it is. The objective of raising productivity can be achieved by finding ways of producing a given level of desirable output with a reduced level of input resource and the control of cost and expense — elimination of waste, damage, etc, are significant steps in raising productivity.

In summary, keep a close watch on all requests for expenditure, whether for things or for services. See that your people work effectively and conserve materials, machines and tools. All this requires vigilance and imagination by you.

16. Work Study

The Definition

Different companies have different meanings for work study, but the term is used here to embrace method study and time study, both of them being applicable to all types of work and work systems, whether it be in factories or in offices. In offices, this type of activity is often called "organisation and methods" (O&M).

Method study is the systematic and logical examination of the way in which work is done, including checking that the work itself is necessary and useful in order to improve the method. Time study is the application of a measuring technique to ascertain the length of time that certain tasks should take if the standard method is properly employed in standard circumstances. Sometimes, time study is also used for payment. In fact, time study is inherently part of method study, in that, in most examinations of the variety of ways in which a job of work can be done, one arrives at the method which is most effective by assuming that it is also the one that takes the least amount of time. This may not always be so, but time is such a significant component of the advantages or disadvantages of a particular method that we can assume that some idea of the length of time that alternative methods will take is required in order to assess which of them is the best.

It may be that, in your company, there is a work study and/or time study department. There may, of course, be an O&M department. These are the resources that are particularly valuable in a company for studying difficult problems or problems where great savings are availability of the use of specialist techniques. Furthermore, certain types of work are so inter-connected between one department and another that it is not feasible to consider the activity in one area without, at the same time, considering the effect in another.

Always Search for a Better Way

The existence of these special departments in no way affects your accountability as a manager to ensure that the work done in your area is done by the best possible

method. Work on the assumption that you will never find the ideal method, that there is always a better method than the one you are using now. One of your principal tasks as a manager is to ensure that people who work for you are applying satisfactory methods, that they are also on the lookout for improved methods, and that you, yourself, are examining the work of all your command, including your own activities, with a view to seeking improvements.

By your own style of management you can develop an enthusiasm towards this activity which is, of course, closely linked with training, in that one normally does not set about training an individual for a particular type of work without first knowing how one wishes it to be done. The process of defining how one would like it done often leads to the perception of a better method.

An Incentive to Seek Better Methods

One of the greatest advantages of a system of payment by results is that it can generate in each individual the incentive to seek better methods or the better use of existing methods. This will be particularly so if the individual concerned feels that the advantage of the better method will be converted into higher earnings for himself. One of the disadvantages of systems of payment that relate to time-work are that they do not in themselves encourage a critical analysis of method. It is up to you as an FLM to encourage it, having your mind continually and regularly alerted to the fact that there is always a better method, and that better methods do not necessarily need expensive equipment or tooling, or need the member to apply undue effort — only to be more effective. One of the most valuable skills of an FLM is his ability to ensure that methods are improving in his area without significant investment in hardware or input from other areas of the company.

It is normal to find, when work study specialists come into a particular department, that there is a degree of insecurity and hostility towards their activity. This is to be expected because, if the work study specialists are to be successful, they will need to discover that better methods are available. Since better methods always are available, work study people will normally find them. For you, as an FLM, it will be difficult for you not to react in a defensive way and look for snags in their proposals because you may be inclined to feel that their work is showing up weaknesses in your own work. The best approach to deal with this is to bear in mind the assumption that there is always a better method. If you, yourself, propose, or someone else suggests that work study can be carried out in your area make it known that you expect improvements to be found and you will be disappointed if they are not, since you believe that there is always a better method. Do not neglect the benefits that can be achieved from work study on "changeover" and on maintenance. Do not just concentrate on the routine work.

The Attitude to Adopt

As far as your subordinates are concerned, they will not take kindly to having specialists standing over them and examining their work in detail, possibly with time-measuring equipment. This is not surprising; nobody enjoys such examination. Again, the probable root of the distaste lies in the feeling of potential criticism

that comes from the discovery of a better method. It is your job, as an FLM, to do your best to dispel these anxieties and you should particularly encourage work study of all forms which reduces the monotony and hard physical activity of the work that is required to be done. Try to persuade your subordinates that work study is in their interests and generate an attitude of co-operation about it.

As in most things, the best way of tackling anxiety on this subject is to go into the attack and do as much work study yourself and encourage as much work study to be done, as is possible in your own area, always remembering you have never finished. To have found a better method is only the start. To see that the best known methods are used, and used all the time, is a major call on your time.

17. Overloads and Underloads

A Matter of Balance

Whatever activity one is involved in, one almost never finds a complete balance between demand and capacity in quantity and variety for any useful length of time, whether this be in the production of goods or in the handling of administrative paperwork, meetings, research work or inspection, etc. These remarks are designed to relate to all types of work.

The main point to be put over in this section is that you, as an FLM, should treat as your first concern the overloads that exist in your area and be less concerned about the underloads. There are many pressures on you to pay attention to the underloads; there is the feeling that you are misusing the company resources if people are not fully employed. There is the anxiety that is created when shortage of work persists. There is a feeling that it is a badly managed area if people are not fully occupied, which may, of course, be true.

Against this, there will almost always be certain parts of your work area where there is insufficient capacity to pass the work through due to the sudden overload on this type of work. You should place first importance on attention to swinging as many resources as you possibly can into coping with the overloads by transfer of people, by transfer of work, by working of overtime, by use of night shifts, by re-programming work, by looking through it to see what is necessary and what can be delayed, by asking for extra special efforts, and by method study.

In the course of doing this, you will frequently alleviate any underloads that exist but, of course, may not eliminate them. Having turned your attention to concentrating on the overloads, you are then more free to examine what useful work can be done by people who have less than enough for a full day's work. You have to decide if the work shortage is of sufficient potential duration requiring you to talk to your own manager about it to see if work can be brought from other areas or if you can help in other areas. Having discussed it with your manager, you will need to communicate frankly and openly with the people who are temporarily short of work about the position and the action you are taking. You must recognise that there is a natural tendency on the part of everybody who is short of work and anxious about their security to let the work spin out a bit and to take somewhat longer to get work done than would normally be the case. You must continue to expect a high level of performance, particularly in those

areas where shortage is extremely temporary and is expected to be followed by an overload, as is frequently the case.

If you can generate in your subordinates the feeling that the work mix continuously changes, that there will always be areas of over- and underload at any one time, that this is part of the normal ongoing process, and that your job as a manager and theirs as part of the resource is to try to develop the maximum flexibility in order to tackle the overloads, you will be well equipped to cope with these fluctuations with the minimum work distortion and personnel problems.

In summary, again the most important thing is to concentrate on the areas where the work-load is greater than desirable or even only greater than average, and to act to cause that to flow through as rapidly as possible.

18. Representatives

The Cause of Great Concern

There are very few managers in modern industry and commerce who do not have, in the groups of people who work for them, one or more individuals whose job it is to act as a representative for the other people in the area. If these representatives are also members of trade unions, they will be called shop stewards or some other similar title. For managers, the existence of subordinates in their command who are also shop stewards or representatives (in the rest of this section the word "representative" will be used to cover all the types of representatives, whether trade union or not) can, and often does cause a great deal of concern and doubt about the exact way in which the manager should behave. This section is intended to give some guidance in this respect.

Unless you are exceedingly unfortunate and one of a very small number of managers, the representatives who work under you will normally be people who are company minded and anxious to do a fair job of representing the people who elected them, whilst, at the same time, helping to protect the viability of the institution for whom they work. There are, so it is said, a few representatives who are motivated for differing purposes, to whom anarchy and problems are a means to a change in our way of life. I suggest that you start on the assumption that there is nobody like that in your command; indeed, it is almost certain that there will not be, since the number of such people in the country is exceedingly small and very much smaller than is generally felt to be so. Even if you are unfortunate enough to have such a person in your area of responsibility, the practice and principles outlined in this section will still be the preferred ones to use.

Dual Role

The first thing to remember about representatives is that they occupy more than one role in the company. In the first instance, there is the role they occupy as an employee of the company, engaged to do a certain job of work. In the second instance, they occupy the role of representative, elected or chosen by or for people, who are employed in the company, in order to provide a means whereby the problems of the people whom they represent can be available to management and can find a means of expression. You, as a manager, have authority over the

individuals when they are occupying their work roles and can ask them to do certain types of work, and can criticise and praise them. When they are occupying their representative role, they are accountable to the people who elected them, and not to you.

You, of course, appoint individuals to work for you and not to be representatives. On the other hand, unless the organisation is very small, you will need to have some representatives, and you will need to come to some reasonable understanding with the representatives about not only the proportion of the time which they spend on representative work, but also the way in which the activity in representative work interferes with the achievement of your work objectives. You must make allowance for the fact that they will need time to do their representative job; it will vary from one week or place of work to another. In some circumstances, it will be negligible; in others, it will be quite strenuous. In general terms, most representatives like to keep the amount of time they spend on representative work down to a minimum. You must establish a basis whereby you indicate to representatives that you expect them to be self-disciplining on the amount of time they spend on representative work, but that you also expect them to let you know before they start representative work, so that you may have the opportunity of discussing with them if this particular representative need has any serious implications as far as your own work is concerned.

Know What is Going on

In effect, you should try to arrange matters so that representative work is going on with your full acceptance and knowledge. If the amount of time spent on representative work seems to you excessive, then, first perhaps you should examine the way in which you manage your own command to see if your own style of management is generating representative activity. If it is not, and if you feel that the amount of time is excessive, you should raise this with the representative quite openly and frankly. This is, of course, a highly sensitive subject and one where it is easily possible to get into a situation of misunderstanding. Nevertheless, it is important that you retain a knowledge of the way in which your people spend their time whilst they are under the employ of the company.

Your tact, skill, sensitivity and courage will play a great part in achieving that right balance between the achievement of work and representative activity. You must also recognise that it may be desirable for you to facilitate representative activity in a more positive way. There may be occasions when it would be desirable, from your point of view, to allow the representative to speak to his constituents as a group during working hours. The decision as to whether or not to use working hours is probably not one that has been delegated to you. Nevertheless, the criterion that ought to be used is quite simple in that the company will pay for representative meetings during working hours if it wishes the meetings to take place.

There are occasions when you will find that the representative in your area is insufficiently responsive to the needs of the people he represents. He may be too "company-minded". This can represent a danger for you in that, whilst he may seem exceedingly helpful and co-operative as far as you are concerned, you

can be building up a substantial amount of dissatisfaction which may ultimately explode with severe consequences. Different representatives have different styles, and you should always treat with the greatest care those representatives whose approaches are gentle, logical and amenable, and make sure that you fully understand the arguments they are making. If, because their approach is reasonable and not causing you anxiety, you ignore what you ought to be doing, then, in the long run, either they will change their style or they will be changed by their constituents. If you are unfortunate enough to have a representative who is threatening and abuses power, you will have a difficult time attempting to re-assert reason. It is, however, possible by the use of argument and discussion, if you show yourself comparatively unaffected by threats but very much affected by a good case. You can very often see your own style of management reflected in the style of representatives who are elected to negotiate with you. Most representatives wish to be seen as "reasonable" people, especially by those who elect them.

Convenors

There are some of you who will have a special situation, in that you have under your responsibility one of the very senior representatives in a company (frequently called "convenors" in trade union language). These senior representatives are involved in representative activity in a much wider area than you yourself deal, and it is exceedingly difficult for you to judge the amount of time that it is reasonable for them to spend away from their work.

The same principles apply, however, in that you should try to establish the situation in which you make it clear to the senior representative that you expect to know when he is on representative activity and have the opportunity of discussing with him any problems or difficulties as far as your own work is concerned as a result of his representative activity. It may be that he is frequently called away by senior management, in which case you should make a point of expecting to be told in advance by the senior management that he is to be released for representative work. You should also make a point of trying to have a discussion with senior management about just how they expect you to behave if the senior representative is, in fact, involved in work which is of a critical nature as far as you are concerned; it may be necessary for re-arrangement of work roles to be organised. You should certainly object to finding yourself in the position where a senior representative is away from work so frequently and at such short notice that your own opportunities for getting work done effectively are damaged. On the other hand, you have to recognise that senior representatives are a necessity and that the company will have to facilitate their activities in some way. Should the activities appear to you to reach almost the point of being a full-time job, you must report this to senior management.

Another problem that sometimes occurs when you have a senior representative under your responsibility is that he will frequently have knowledge of company decisions and policy in advance of yourself. This may be a continuous source of irritation to you and you should seek to have the means by which communications to you and your colleagues about company events and policies are speeded up.

You can, for example, ask your boss to arrange that FLMs are collected together as soon as possible after a meeting with senior representatives has been held and given the information as fast as possible. On the other hand, you will have to recognise that the sheer practicality of events is such that the senior representative will always know first.

One thing you can do, however, is to ask him to refrain from passing this information on to other employees (except in his representative role) until such time as reasonable opportunity for communication through the work or executive system has taken place. Make no mistake about it, you will always find yourself in a position where the senior representative probably knows more than you do; also that he knows it sooner. You should seek to minimise this as much as possible, but be resigned to its inevitability.

No Thanks

Remember that the role of a representative is not easy. He normally gets thanks from no one and criticism from all. He too, has to have sanction for his actions. Be careful how you question the strength of his sanction. If you do it clumsily, you will find yourself challenging his position of privilege in itself, rather than on a particular issue, and all of us close our ranks to protect our representative systems from the executive.

Accept that, in fact, it will be the representative who decides how and when he spends his time on representative activities, but that he will hope to gain your agreement, and also do a useful executive job. Representatives can only be replaced by the people who elect them. This can take a great deal of time. Have confidence that, in the long run, if you are patient and steadfast, your subordinates will elect and support appropriate representatives.

Do not expect, encourage or condone a representative doing your job. If timekeeping is bad, speak to the latecomers — do not complain to the representative and expect him to do it. If people have a grievance or complaint, they should approach you first. It may be that the first you hear of a problem is when a representative comes to you and says, for example: "Joe Campbell thinks his work area is too dark and needs more lighting." If this is the first you have heard about it and it relates only to the individual and not a group, you should say to the representative, "I will speak to Joe, but it would save both of us time if you will tell Joe to speak to me first next time and only come to you if he is dissatisfied with how I react." Also, you should speak to Joe, so that next time he speaks first to you — not to deny him his right to speak to his representative, but to let you have a chance to deal with it first.

Leadership

If a lot of the problems your representative brings up are issues which individuals should have raised with you, you must ask yourself whether you are providing sufficient leadership. All groups tend to look for a leader, and, if you do not fulfil that role, people will look for that quality elsewhere. On the one hand, it may be that you are being arbitrary and dictatorial. On the other, you may be too tentative and self-effacing. You are the leader of your command and not the representative; it is up to you to ensure that, by the exercise of your personal skills, the people who work for you turn naturally to you for advice and guidance.

19. Grievances

A Feeling of being Treated Unfairly

For the purpose of this section, the word "grievance" is used to mean a strong feeling by an individual that he is being treated unfairly. This is different from a situation in which a group of people feel that they have a common problem that needs resolution. Where a group of people are involved, it is normally appropriate to discuss the problem with a representative to attempt to get the problem solved. With an individual, although a representative may be involved, the issue will normally be one in which the individual feels personally aggrieved and in a way which is not shared by others (except, perhaps, in sympathy).

Grievances can be broadly divided into two categories. First, and most commonly, there is the situation in which the individual has the view that his manager's treatment of him is unfair, in that it is inconsistent with the way others are treated, that it departs from custom and practice or from agreed policy. Secondly, there is the situation, which is fairly rare, in which the individual feels that, although he has been treated according to custom and practice or agreed policy, his situation is special in some way, and that had it been a frequent occurrence, custom and practice or agreed policy would have been modified. In the first case, he is asking to be treated as others are treated, and, in the second, he is asking to be treated as an exception.

Individual or Group

When a representative raises a matter with you, it is important to discover at an early stage whether the problem is one that is related to an individual or a group. If it is an individual matter, then if you have not heard about it before from the individual, you should request the representative to leave it with you to discuss with the individual first. Indeed, as a general matter, you should encourage representatives to refuse to handle problems of this sort before they have been raised with you by the individuals. This is in the interests of all, and reduces the number of trivial incidents in which representatives get involved unnecessarily.

When you are discussing a grievance with one of your subordinates, try to discover if he is asking for exceptional treatment, and, if so, why. If you think he has a case, you have to decide if you have the authority to agree. If you have not, then raise it with your manager with your recommendation. At this stage, you should not indicate to your subordinate your own view, as you may raise false hopes. Indeed, on discussing it with your manager and realising the implications, you may change your mind.

If it is clear that the individual believes that you are treating him unfairly, then it is your judgement which is being questioned. Make sure you have the facts correct, and that you know precisely what he is asking you to do. Do not be afraid to change your mind or to keep to your decision. Do what you think is fair and do your best to help the person see that you are fair. If you fail to convince him and he still has strong feelings of unfair treatment, you clearly have a problem. It is wrong for you to change your mind just because someone thinks you are unfair; but it is also undesirable to have someone with an unresolved grievance working for you.

In your company, there may be a grievance procedure, in which case you should encourage its use. If there is no procedure, you could invite the person with the grievance to discuss it with you and the personnel specialist, or with your own manager. If the outcome of any formal or informal procedure is favourable to you, remember that the sense of grievance may still remain. If it is unfavourable to you, you will probably feel let down; assume you were wrong and try to learn so that you operate differently next time.

Be Frank, Fair and Fearless

In the course of involving any procedure, formal or informal, do not hesitate to speak frankly and fairly on your view and do not be worried that you cannot prove your judgement. If you know the relevant facts, know the custom and practice or policy and try to be fair to the individual and the company, there should be nothing to fear.

Make sure that if your decision is changed and if the reason for agreeing to the individual's case is different from the reason he argued, this is clearly understood by everybody; otherwise it will be assumed by everybody that his reason was accepted. As an illustration of this I remember a grievance being brought to me concerning dismissal. The manager said that, in his view, an individual was not working at a fast enough pace. The individual claimed that he was. Clearly, since I did not know the man I could not judge on his pace of work. I could only ensure that the manager was familiar with the work of the individual and was not biased against him. That would have been the end of the matter and the man would have had to leave had I not discovered that, due to a misunderstanding, he had never been given an explicit final warning about his performance. As a result of this, I cancelled the dismissal and told the man to go back to work and that he now had a final warning. It was necessary to make clear to all in that area that the man had not proved that his pace of work was satisfactory; indeed, the manager's view had been accepted. If this was not made clear, others would have been entitled to assume that a new and lower standard was acceptable.

For you, as an FLM, the point of this example is that should you or your manager change your decision, make quite sure that those who have knowledge of the issue understand the reason for the change.

Seek Respect, Not Popularity

As a manager, you are paid to make decisions. Your job is to make them fairly and in adequate knowledge of facts and policies. The popularity or unpopularity of a decision is not a safe guide to its correctness. Have confidence in your judgement; remember that as a manager you cannot expect popularity but, if you are very fortunate, you may gain respect.

Respect comes from effectiveness, fairness and dedication. If you seek popularity directly, you will ensure that you do not even get respected. Once you are aware of a deep-seated grievance, tackle it vigorously and quickly; do not delay and put off the difficult discussions. Fortunately, it is infrequent to have individuals who consistently and strongly feel ill-treated without cause. If you have such a case, you have to tackle it as another problem. It is one of the acceptability of the person to work for you.

Do not confuse grievances as described here with disagreements on matters of policy about executive work. From time to time, one of your subordinates may disagree with the particular way in which you require some piece of work done. Assume his motive is to assist the company's performance. This issue will almost certainly not affect him personally unfairly, but should he disagree so strongly that he or you, or both of you, think it would help to discuss it with your manager, you should encourage this. Do not use the grievance procedure; keep that for feelings of personal justice.

20. Overtime

A Right, or Rare and Resented

This is a highly contentious subject which is more than most very much dependent on the style of the FLM for the resolution of problems. In some environments, FLMs will find themselves in the position where the people who work for them expect that they can work overtime as a right. This is where, over a number of years, overtime has been so regular that it has become part of the standard of living of the individuals concerned. There will be other areas where overtime is rare and resented. There may also be cultures built up where overtime is felt to be something which is not specifically allocated to an individual or a small section of a group, but where it is only acceptable if the whole of a particular department works overtime and where they have a rule of "one in — all in". Almost all these cultures have developed as a result of less than effective FLMs, and have been condoned by higher management finding themselves in difficulties over how to tackle the problem.

If the subject of overtime becomes a debate between higher management and representatives on the issue of the "right" of management to instruct overtime, this will almost always result in an impasse. In fact, representatives will recognise that, from time to time, there are circumstances which, for the company, are most serious, when it is essential that an individual or a group works unusually lengthy hours and at very short notice. The management also recognises that the unfettered "right" to instruct overtime can cause such inconvenience to individuals that it can be beyond the point of toleration. Trying to resolve this as a "right" is unproductive.

Why?

The real key to the correct handling of overtime lies in the method and style of the FLM. It is almost always you, the FLM, who decides that overtime is necessary, because if you were able to find ways of getting work done without it, the question of overtime would never arise. It is because you come to the conclusion that a particular job of work cannot be done within normal working hours that the need for overtime has been initiated. This, then, is the first key point at which you, the FLM, are a person of great influence. You should seek to find ways of avoiding overtime with great vigour and energy and, not only that, you should make it clear to all the people who work for you, and to your own boss, that this process has been gone through. You should develop a reputation

such that it can be assumed that if you have decided that overtime is necessary, there really is no other way of achieving the work objective. In this same connection, you should be on the watch for repetitive incidents when it seems that certain types of work continually need overtime, so that you can analyse why and come up with solutions which create a remedy to continuous use of overtime for this particular type of work.

Who?

The next decision that you have to make is who works the overtime and when it will be worked. Normally, when considering when overtime is worked, you will be wanting it as soon as possible, since, presumably, it is for work which needs to be done earlier than would normally be expected if it is done during normal hours. When considering who works the overtime, you will, naturally, take account of those people most experienced and competent to do the work that is needed. In both of these decisions, it will be necessary for you to take a balanced view between the time the work is done and the inconvenience it may cause to the individuals concerned and their preparedness to work overtime.

When considering who does the work, it must be recognised that one of the unfortunate effects of overtime is that it gives the appearance of change in the differential payment between individuals, and your job is to see that, over a period of time, this is spread as reasonably and fairly as possible. This may mean that, from time to time, you will be using people on overtime who are not quite as effective as others who could do the work, but who have had a number of demands made on their time in the recent past, and, in order to spread both the inconvenience and the extra earnings of overtime, it is better to spread the work. Achieving this spreading activity may require training and development of skills which would not, in the normal course, be essential. Again, you are in the position of having to achieve a balance.

Notice

When it comes to the question of inconvenience, you must place great weight, and be seen to place it, on the avoidance of inconvenience to the people who work for you. You should try to give notice as far ahead as possible; you should also try to see that, in rotation, your people have guaranteed times when they will be free of overtime so that they can plan ahead for activities at the weekends or evenings. If you are known to use every device to avoid overtime, to give as much notice as is feasible, and to spread the inconvenience and the earnings as far as is reasonably possible, you will have fewer problems concerning the use of overtime than if you ignore these important factors.

Saturdays and Sundays

The custom and practices that have built up over many years in differing environments about overtime are great and varied, and it is not possible or necessary for you to change them overnight. You should, however, have in your mind the objectives of working that have been described in this section. You may be in an environment where, for example, if weekend overtime is worked, it is

preferentially worked on a Sunday instead of a Saturday. This may seem very strange to you who are not involved in such a culture and, clearly, it is contrary to the original negotiations about premium rates where Sunday was considered to be so inconvenient as to have to cost the company more. In some areas, an inversion of thinking has taken place, where the employee says, in effect, that "unless you pay the premiums that are available on Sunday, I will not work overtime".

Where the culture exists for continuous and regular overtime, or overtime that is only applicable to all and not to a few, again you have a problem. Because, in general terms, overtime is to deal with specific problems in specific areas, the arranging of overtime for a complete department is normally not beneficial and you should seek overtime for the area required only and, if refused unless overtime is provided for the whole area, you will have to be guided by your senior manager as to what policy to adopt. You should never give up seeking to have overtime run in the sensible manner you would like.

Balancing Work-loads

If overtime is being run in a company as a means of increasing wages then, indeed, a problem exists when reductions in overtime become necessary due to a reduction in the work-load. It is conceivable that, in order to preserve some stability of employment in a fluctuating work-load situation, it may be desirable that regular and substantial overtime is worked during certain periods to avoid the consequences of increasing the labour force when the work-load is high and having to reduce it when the work-load is low. If such a policy is used by the management, it is of great benefit for this to be an explicit understanding, so that the extra pay which is generated during the period of high work-load may not be taken to become a new standard of living to be maintained during the period of lower work-load.

There are certain types of work for which overtime is more likely than others; maintenance work frequently requires people to stay behind at short notice or to work unusual hours in order to being facilities which are failing to operate back into operation. This type of work should be the subject of regular review to see what can be done, not only to eliminate the overtime, but, if it appears to be prevalent, to try to rearrange working hours so that more of it could be done within a normal working week. Extreme cases of this are, of course, work like security, in which an around-the-clock service is provided by a complete coverage through "normal" working hours. However, there will always remain some jobs where, by the nature of the work or service, the working of overtime, sometimes at short notice, is a feature of the job. Examples would be electricians involved in breakdowns, chauffeurs, etc. If you are responsible for such work, you should make it clear to your members and feature it as a job requirement when making appointments.

Supervision and Support Services

When you have decided on overtime and made the necessary arrangements, it is important that you define the work task you wish to be done, as well as the level of supervision, and indirect services, if any, that will be required to support the overtime activity. There will be a tendency to assume that the work on overtime

will require very much the same type of supervision and support services that are provided during the day. It will almost always be found that a large proportion of these are unnecessary; in fact, with properly motivated people, you can identify the job of work to be done in advance sufficiently well for most of it to be carried out without supervision and without many of the support services provided during normal working hours.

There will, of course, be exceptions, such as canteen and maintenance facilities. Frequently, quality control or inspection people are brought in to work overtime just because production are working overtime in a certain area. This needs careful examination to see if the work created during overtime cannot be inspected in normal working hours. There will be many other similar examples where support activity is unnecessarily included in the overtime.

You should always avoid getting into a situation where you feel, and convey by your actions, that you are handing out "goodies" when you are asking people to work overtime. In your very phraseology, you can influence the way in which the people who work for you see how you regard overtime. For example, you can say, "You may work overtime this weekend Joe" or you can say "I am afraid that because of the work-load on your section and the way in which I expect it to increase during next week, I am going to have to ask you to work overtime this weekend, Joe". In the first instance, you are showing that you treat overtime as a "perk". In the second, you are showing that you treat it as an inconvenience which is necessary to get work done. If you create the impression that overtime is a "perk", then the attention of all the people who work for you will be devoted to seeing that you hand out "perks" fairly, irrespective of the needs of work. If you treat it as an inconvenience, you can motivate people to help you to avoid the need for overtime.

"Free" Overtime

A word about people who always seem to be working late and at weekends without having been asked and who are not paid for their overtime. This can be due for a variety of reasons; persistent occurrence of events like this should not go unnoticed by you, and you should seek to understand the reason for this persistent "free" overtime. It can be caused because there is genuinely too much work for the individual concerned to get through during the day, and he may feel that failure to complete it on time will be regarded by you as an indication of inadequate effort. It may be that the individual feels insecure and wishes to create an impression of diligence so that you have a high opinion of him. It may be that he is working in an ineffective way and that training could put this right. It may be that he just enjoys his work. The same analysis should take place, although not all the same reasons will be valid, for people who regularly take work home from an office.

For all FLMs, the question of overtime is a subject that requires constant vigilance, and the correct approach. Let us face it, the great proportion of all the overtime worked is unnecessary, and, where it is worked the opportunity for FLMs to make an impact on the productivity of their area by gradually reducing the overtime is there to be taken.

21. Night Shifts and Shift Work

The Reasons

Where the financial investment in resources used is very high indeed, or where a continuous process is involved especially where the total process time is long, it sometimes becomes an economic necessity to ensure that the resources are used for a higher-than-normal proportion of the total time. This is often achieved by running night shifts, three shifts or some other form of gaining extra hours during the week. The use by management of these other shifts involves a cost penalty in paying the premiums necessary for the inconvenience and this at once brings into focus the recognition that such arrangements are generally regarded as "anti-social". This is reinforced by the tendency to try to make the arrangements more acceptable by the use, for example, of double day shifts and four-night weeks which reduce the amount of time, in the first case, which is actually spent during night time and, in the second case, provide compensation in the form of extra long weekends.

One exception to the generalisation that this type of shift working is only employed in factories and mines is in computer departments where it is quite common practice to operate computers for two or three shifts. This, again, is in line with utilisation of a high investment resource.

Each company and site develops a different culture about the use of night shifts. In some operations, a "permanent" night shift is in operation, although it may euphemistically be called "extended night shift". When this happens, the manager on the day shift has to understand clearly his accountability for the work done. Quite often, it is impossible to distinguish between the work done on days and on nights without a great deal of expense and so the manager on days is also held accountable for the results on nights. The night-shift manager is often in charge but may, in fact, be acting as a deputy for the day-shift manager rather than being a manager in his own right. Some types of work require a complete shift to have their own management and the work of each shift is individually accounted for. This is a clear situation and obviously preferable if it can be conveniently arranged.

Rotation Basis

Other cultures organise the night shift or shift work on a basis of rotation, so that, for example, a man/woman may spend one month on nights and then one month on days, or some other period of time. This has the benefit of spreading the inconvenience and, at the same time, where differentials may be a problem, of spreading the extra money. Each manager has to decide how the use of night shift is viewed by the people who work for him and the community around. In some instances, it will be regarded as desirable work because of the extra money it provides; in others, it will be regarded as undesirable because of the social deprivation it brings about.

When a permanent night shift is in operation, the manager must be most careful that there is good communication between days and nights and that the night shift is not allowed to degenerate into some form of "forgotten area". It can become

the focus for blame and hostility. Equally, the "forgotten" shift can be hostile to the day shift. This can bring long-term difficulties and tensions that must be avoided by preventing the establishment of separatist activities.

Sometimes, the work to be done on nights is fundamentally different from the work done on days. For example, maintenance work done to furnaces is such that it can only be done when the furnaces have cooled down and they may need to be maintained between each day shift. One then finds, in effect, no equivalent work on day shift. Similarly, on certain types of batch work, it is necessary to have a mobile flexible force of people who can deal with bottlenecks; their skills will need to be varied and wide in order to be able to cope with this type of work.

Avoid "Forgotten Men"

The manager of people on nights may be the corresponding manager on the day shift and should always make efforts to keep in communication with people on the unpleasant shifts, preferably by visiting and certainly by written communication. There is a great danger of those on the unpleasant shifts becoming the "forgotten men". If you normally work on days, you should make a practice, from time to time, of spending a complete week working on the unpleasant shift to gain an understanding of the way in which work operates under these conditions and to provide the necessary reminder of the special needs.

It is often possible to arrange that work provided for the night shift is more straightforward than that normally performed on the day shift. This is appropriate, since, first, there are fewer services to help with problems on the night shift and, second, people working unusual hours may not be as perceptive as they would be if working more normally. Certainly, try to avoid the opposite, i.e. leaving the difficult jobs for the night shift.

22. Flexibility

An Outcome of the Need for Job Security

Most people seek job security, and management has responded to this need amongst workers, partly as a result of social pressure and partly as a result of legislation. However, this makes the need to develop flexible resources even more paramount. Flexibility means the ability to cope with fluctuations in the volume, mix or variation of work, by rapid response and within existing resources.

As industry becomes more sophisticated, it tends to become more specialised and, hence, usually more inflexible. This trend can be seen in the development of special-purpose machines and specialist skills. These, coupled with "job protection" which develops when people feel insecure, make it more difficult to achieve flexibility.

You can help by putting your mind to the possibilities that can be created. You can foster the idea of flexibility and transfer people on work regularly, and cause it to be accepted as a normal event; you can suggest ways that machines can be made more versatile, e.g. a word processor rather than a typewriter. There is nearly always, of course, a cost penalty to be paid either in training, equipment or operating costs, and a balance must be achieved.

You can also help by doing your best to help other overloaded FLMs and seeking their help when you have problems you cannot solve by yourself. By your approach you can motivate the people who work for you to see flexibility as an advantage, both in job security and in job interest.

If your work force is accustomed to moving within its own boundaries, it is normally less difficult to expand those boundaries to give greater overall flexibility. If you permit a state of undisturbed familiarity to develop, you inhibit your chances of being able to achieve flexibility when the need arises. You should strive for flexibility as a policy not just try it when you need to use it.

23. Attitude

The people who work for you, your colleagues and your manager, will have in their minds an impression of your attitudes. It is as well, from time to time, to reflect on what these attitude assessments seem to be and what they could be. Try to cultivate an attitude that matches the qualities that were outlined in the first section. In summary, these could be shown as follows:

- firmness, without inflexibility;
- dispensing praise where it is due, and criticism where it is required;
- receptiveness to the problems of the people who work for you and pride in their achievements;
- vigilance;
- company mindedness;
- loyalty to your manager, to your subordinates and to the company;
- consistency, and
- determination to achieve quality, delivery and cost objectives.

In one of the characteristics mentioned above, i.e. vigilance, you should feel continuously accountable for the work being done by the people who work for you. It is all too easy for you to shut your eyes to departures from the correct behaviour rather than risk confrontation with one of your subordinates. It is also too easy to sit in the office at difficult times. It is always possible to find a reason to be visiting some other part of the organisation when problems which should be tackled can be deferred. Have the courage to tackle the difficult problems as soon as you know of them, recognise the problems in work behaviour as soon as they occur and act on them immediately; do not delay; do not be afraid of face-to-face contact.

Speak your mind frankly and fairly and be consistent on this from day to day. Try to recognise that you may have "bad" days and "good" days, and that the reason for this may be outside the work environment. Try to be seen as a person who is consistent, who always gives praise when it is due and is always firm and critical when this is justified. Expect hard work from the people who work for you and show them by your actions that you work hard yourself. Try to recognise that you may have "favourites" as well as those with whom you do not get on too well. Try to treat both categories equally fairly. If somebody comes up with a

good idea and one which you think you might have thought of yourself, commend it. If you make a mistake, admit it. Be prepared to accept criticism about work from subordinates — they could be right. If not, it shows their interest; explain why they are wrong. If they are correct, accept it with thanks.

Do not take advantage of any short-term weakness that representatives or individuals may have in the power situation. Be consistent in treating each issue on its merits.

Remember that, as an FLM, you are the person most likely to be able to influence the effectiveness with which the company's plans are operated. Without your willing and active co-operation, they are unlikely to be of any use whatever. A brilliant company plan, ineffectively carried out, is normally of much less use than a moderate plan effectively carried out. The majority of failures in business planning come about because of ineffective introduction in detail at the level of the FLM. This may be, of course, because they have been insufficiently worked out in detail to ensure their feasibility and their effectiveness, but the ingenuity, skill and commitment of good FLMs can overcome much of this and bring success from moderate planning. Your whole attitude and commitment are pivotal to the company's activities.

Monitoring

Part of your job involves ensuring that the things which should be done are done, i.e. "monitoring". Differing types of instruction require different levels of monitoring. Some need hardly any, e.g. an instruction to break early for lunch; some need a great deal, e.g. an instruction to visit and collect from a difficult and late paying customer. Keep aware of the areas that need monitoring and do it.

Try to keep your mind tuned to see problems as opportunities. If you discipline yourself this way, you can help others to do the same. Make it a challenge to find an opportunity for your skill in every problem. Here are a few examples:

- A subordinate who is excessively absent — to remotivate him or, if this fails to see that he leaves you without ill feeling.
- A lost order — to review selling techniques, product suitability, prices for the next approach.
- Late delivery — to minimise inconvenience to the customer and to let him see that the company is not indifferent.
- Difficult recruitment — to retrain from within and/or rearrange the work.
- Underload — to help in other areas, and to do the things often neglected.
- Grievance — to show you are fair, firm and open-minded.

Be Understanding

You are fortunate in that you have the prospect of an interesting job. You can vary your activity, visit different areas, have regular contact with others. The people who work for you are more limited in their opportunities. Try to detect if they are bored, remembering that what satisfies some may bore others. If you feel that some people regard their work as a drudgery, see what you can do. For example, it may be possible to make the job of a copy typist more interesting.

You might suggest that you would like to have your letters codified — according to the type of person they are sent to, geographical area and so on. It may emerge that a standard letter could be devised for certain types of correspondence, which would remove some of the routine work. You may not be able to do very much, but try. At least have the ambition to arrange things so that your subordinates enjoy their work, even if you do not see how to do this in some cases.

Try to develop a sound relationship with each subordinate, not so deep that you get involved in too many domestic issues, but deep enough to enable you to have a balanced view of their problems, ambitions, etc. You will, quite naturally, shrink from many of the less pleasant parts of your job. We all do. The important thing is not to shirk them. Every time you avoid shirking, the less you will shrink next time. Every time you shirk, the more you will shrink next time.

How you say things is very important. It is usually best to be matter of fact and straightforward, and remember that there are nearly always secondary meanings in all communications. See that those in yours are the ones you want (e.g. section 18).

Speak freely and frankly to your manager. Seek his advice if you are stuck, but remember you are still accountable. Make sure you know the rules, but they cannot cover every situation, so be prepared not to follow the rules in situations that would make this sensible, and then report what you have done. For this, expect little praise — and a lot of criticism if it does not work out!

Be committed — not only to the things that you yourself would have said would happen, but to the things that obviously need doing. Look at problems as subjects requiring solutions, not as barriers to achievement. Your determination can make possible the potentially "infeasible" needs of the company.

24. Attendance

A Universal, Simple Approach

This is a subject which embraces timekeeping and absence. Different companies will, of course, have varied policies, but it is worthwhile to try to define a simple and basic approach which is almost universally applicable.

A company is paid for the useful work it performs to create goods or services for its customers. A company pays its employees (including managers) for the work they do. In most industrial communities, because of the interactive dependence of one person on another, they can only work really effectively when all or most are present. This means that, in an industrial or commercial enterprise, it is necessary to establish common starting and finishing times for work — note the use of the word "work". Once having established these times, they have to be adhered to by all because the maintenance of a standard can only be reasonably achieved if it is seen to apply to all. The fact that an individual has worked at above an average rate, or in some other way what would seem to permit exception, must be looked at carefully because it is normally not possible to arrange things so that changes to starting and finishing times are seen by all to be fair. If a person is working on his own or at home the hours he works are relatively unimportant so long as he does an adequate quantity of work. In a community with rules, departure is seen as a relaxation of the standard.

Thus, for each area and individual, there should be mutually understood starting and stopping times. These times should mean times for starting and stopping work, not arrival and departure times. The starting time is the time at which the individual is at his work place ready to start work. The finishing time is the time that an individual stops working. There are certain jobs where the definition of work may include preparation for work and preparation for finishing. These are normally in circumstances where the condition in which a person arrives at work is not suitable for his work and the condition in which he finishes is not suitable for him to leave work, and where these differences are significantly greater than normally experienced, for example, where special protective clothing is required or more than average washing is required, or where the working temperature or pressure require time for adjustment, or where the place of work is some way from the normal place for reporting for work.

Thus, once the requirement has been specified, the standards of performance are clear: a person is either working on time or he is not. You, as an FLM, must recognise that you must "work" those few minutes more than the attendance time. You must be seen to be at work before the start and after the finish, both to observe the standard of adherence and to set the example. You cannot depart from the standards because, if you do, this will be thought to be setting a new and lesser standard. All groups of people contain individuals who are always diligent and others who always tend to be late (usually only a few minutes). The people in the first category are to be commended and those in the second criticised. Of course, there will always be occasions when people are unavoidably late and, apart from understanding the reason, you should accept this. The persistent late comer must be corrected. It is an exaggeration to say that there is no value an individual can have which is so great that departure from the standard by him can be tolerated on a continuing basis, but it is not far from being true.

Praise and criticism must always be individual, and face to face. Do not put up notices complaining about bad timekeeping. You will irritate good performers and have no effect on the offenders. Do not expect representatives to do the job either.

Flexible Working Hours

It may be that your subordinates have flexible hours, in which case your area will be one where the individuals are less dependent on each other at work, or on the provision of common services. In this case, each person arranges his own time with you. The principles outlined earlier in this section apply just the same.

Although they start and finish at unusual times, part-timers are not usually a problem with regards to being thought to be late starters and/or early finishers, because their times of starting or finishing are sufficiently different from the normal as to be clearly not ill-disciplined. But obviously the same standards must apply.

If "clocking-in" is used to record attendance, do not let this be a substitute for your personal involvement. "Clocking-in" particularly gives rise to bad performance at finishing time because, to avoid delay at the clock, people tend to queue before finishing time. This is unacceptable.

You must also be aware of the person or persons who take excessive time at tea breaks, on private telephone calls or on visits to the toilet. Dealing with this particular problem is one of the more irritating and annoying parts of your job. It can feel both to you and to your subordinate that you are acting rather like a school teacher talking to a naughty child. Reference should be made again to section 8 on "Self-supervision". You must draw attention to departures from standard and you must also insist that you have not got to keep on doing this to keep the standard right. You must look for self-discipline and you should be more critical of the need to keep reminding individuals to improve their performance than of the actual departure from the standard itself.

In general terms, it is not a good thing to try to penalise lateness by stopping pay. Regular or frequent lateness is something which should not be tolerated; deducting of pay is almost an acceptance and if the lateness is due to a good reason and is infrequent, the company should be able to stand the cost of the non-attendance.

Absence

There are a variety of situations in which it is worth considering absence. In general terms, statistics would seem to indicate that the more junior a person in the company, the more likely is his average performance as regards absence to be unsatisfactory. The reasons for this are probably complex, but, nevertheless, it could seem to indicate that FLMs are less effective at handling absence problems than the more senior managers or, perhaps, it is that the problems are less difficult to handle when dealing with more senior people or, perhaps, job interest and motivation give higher performance.

Absence can be due to a variety of causes, the most common of which is sickness. Sickness can be certificated (i.e. with the endorsement of a doctor) or uncertificated. Most companies have rules about the way to behave and the payment, if any, to be made. As an FLM, you must remember that the basic reason a person is employed by the company is for them to attend to carry out a job of work. Excessive and continuous absence, whether certificated or not, poses the question of whether the company should be continuing to employ the individual. If the absence is certificated, then, naturally, this is a really difficult and emotive problem with which to deal, but one that you should not hesitate to tackle initially by discussing it with your own manager. Continuous and uncertificated absence is not normally difficult to deal with. Very often, absence due to sickness is associated with an attitude of mind that people have towards their work. Some people will come to work when they do not feel 100 per cent and others will stay away for the same degree of sickness.

As an FLM, you can have an influence on this attitude by the way in which you motivate and lead your subordinates. Many companies have sick pay schemes which organise the payment of individuals when they are away sick. This should never be interpreted as sanction for individuals to have so many days off a year with pay. The schemes are introduced to ensure that the individual who has to be off work due to genuine illness has some income to help him through the difficult time. An individual who does not need sick pay is to be regarded as fortunate, not as a loser of an entitlement.

Domestic Emergencies

There are also conditions of absence which have nothing to do with sickness and can be due to a domestic emergency or some other requirement which cannot be arranged out of working hours. In this case, depending on the company and the way in which authority is delegated, you may or may not be able to authorise the absence with pay. In any event, you will certainly be able to propose such a recommendation, even if you are not authorised yourself to decide. The guideline to be used in such circumstances is to try to be as helpful as possible to people who recognise their obligations to the company. As an example, if an individual seeks permission for one or two days off or to leave early on one particular day and this individual is somebody who has a good record of attendance and is hard-working and company minded, then, providing this sort of occurrence is reasonably infrequent, it would be best and appropriate to assist him by making no deductions of pay.

On the other hand, an individual, say, with comparatively short service, who is showing little signs of conforming to the standards you require, should not be granted such a facility. If you refuse a request for this reason, then say so. In all cases, you should expect, wherever reasonably possible, that the individual discusses the matter with you in advance; if this is not possible due to some sudden occurrence, you should expect the individual to telephone you as soon as possible to indicate why he is away, and this includes sickness, and when he expects to return. This will enable you to cope with the absence more effectively.

Maintenance of effective standards in the whole of this area is one of the most onerous of the jobs you have. It cannot be shirked, however, and is one of the fields where only you can ensure that the job is done properly.

25. Tidiness

The Showpiece of the FLM's Effectiveness

You may wonder why such an apparently trivial subject warrants a section in this book. In a sense, it epitomises the type of problem FLMs frequently meet — the problem of ensuring that their work group achieves a good standard of adherence to the rules relating to the apparently less important aspects of the work. In that sense, it is the public "showpiece" for their effectiveness in these things.

One of the first things that strikes any visitor to a factory or office is the state of tidiness of the area. A tidy factory or office gives an impression of efficiency; an untidy one does not. It is worth reflecting on why this is so. I suggest it is because most people assume that the manager's policy is to have a tidy department, and it is obvious that, if it is untidy, the policy is not being followed. It is not unreasonable to assume that if he is incapable of having simple policies followed which are so obviously being departed from, it is very likely that many other policies which he has, and which are not so obviously seen when departed from, are also in disarray.

For example, if tools are left lying about, it is reasonable to assume that the instructions with regard to checking for quality are also not carried out. In the



office, if papers are all over the desks, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the policy with regard to filling in forms is not correctly implemented.

Pride in Cleanliness

Tidiness is one of those desirable characteristics that it seems difficult to achieve without appearing to be a schoolteacher. It is, however, one of those things which you just have to realise is part of your job; you cannot ignore it, and must persist and see that it is achieved and maintained. Generally speaking, human nature being what it is, the achievement and maintenance of tidiness is something that requires continuous vigilance and action on your part. It is noticeable how it is becoming increasingly accepted that a man only superficially cleans the machine on which he is working, yet skilled men — and particularly some years ago — regarded it as most important and a matter of pride to keep their machine tools beautifully clean. You have the opportunity to encourage and develop this conscientious attitude and to ensure that it is understood as being part of the work content of the people who work for you. Probably more than anything else, the appearance of the facilities and work area under your responsibility is a good indication in a short time of the extent to which you are really in control of your department.

Remember, efficiency is a totality; permitted slackness on seemingly trivial aspects quickly creates a general climate of casualness, and discipine is reduced over a wide area, affecting work pace, quality, etc, which erodes the totality.

26. Procedural Discipline

The Key to Control

Most organisations, as they grow, find it necessary to institute various types of procedures. These become, very often, an irritant to those who have to use them, but are essential for the smooth operation of an organisation above a size that can be controlled by a very small number of people. As an FLM, you will inevitably be involved in contributing to these procedures, either by initiating them, completing them, or partially completing them and sending them on to others. You will find that there are internal requisitions for stationery, tooling, purchases, personnel, etc.

It is all too easy to see these procedures as an impediment to getting work done quickly, and they may often be felt to be a time-wasting exercise. This may lead you to attempt to get round the system or procedures, and avoid using them properly. There are, of course, occasions — probably very few — where this is the right thing to do. When these occasions occur, it is very important to report the decision to avoid using the usual procedure. The procedures can be badly designed and irrelevant to the work in hand, in which case you must take action to try to stimulate change that will make them more useful and relevant.

However, assuming that the systems are basically not too bad, then, as an FLM, you have to set the standard in your area that completes the procedural part of the systems of the company with promptitude, accuracy and completeness. You must also make sure that you have a grip on the "paperwork work in progress" that is in your area. Many pieces of procedural systems are a sequential process, and if each department or individual takes a day, an hour or a minute longer

than is necessary, this accumulates so that, at the end of the system, there has been an enormous amount of time wasted in achieving the objective.

Eliminate Hold-ups

Vigilance also has to be applied by you, and the people who work for you, in procedural systems that involve your pausing before completing your own part of the system by involving another department. For example, an estimator, when preparing an estimate for some particular piece of work, may decide that some equipment has to be purchased and will raise a query with the purchasing department for an external quotation. It may be that he cannot proceed any further until this quotation has been received. You must ensure that he does not sit back and think that he has discharged his responsibility merely by requesting the information from the purchasing department. You must ensure that he feels it is up to him to progress this work so that he gets it in time and completes the part of the procedure in which he is involved.

Equally, a person working in a purchasing department sending out an enquiry to a supplier, cannot sit back and wait until the quotation comes in. He must make sure it arrives on time. It must be no defence to say, "I have sent it to so-and-so and am waiting for it to come back." This is just "passing the buck". If, by operating this way, you find that you can only get any service by chasing, then you must take this up with your manager and the manager of the servicing department. It is a symptom of a general slackness in the servicing department. You must tread along the dividing line that insists you get what you need without removing the need of the servicing department to provide what is needed without continuous reminders from you.

You must also ensure that in your area there is a culture developed for the completeness with which procedures are followed. All too often, one sees forms being filled up with many of the parts requiring information left vacant. If the information is not thought to be necessary, challenge the need for it, but after you have completed the form fully.

Insist on Accuracy

You must also ensure that there is a great respect for accuracy in completion of various paperwork procedures. Ensure that quantities entered are accurate, that dates are accurate, etc. Do not tolerate a position in which people become slack in completing documents with accuracy.

Be on the alert for changes to the procedural systems which become apparent to you as being necessary. Put these forward constructively, saying that "instead of doing that, we should now do this" and then propose the alternative. Remember that it may not be acceptable because of its implications elsewhere, but, nevertheless, you can stimulate ideas that may result in improvement.

Avoid, where you can, working sequentially, and where possible work in parallel. For example, a sales department can issue "planning orders" that give advance notice to production when there only remain some details to be settled with the customer. By doing so, they permit the pre-production paperwork to be started by factories in parallel with the final clarification with the customer. How far the

production process can proceed will vary from case to case, and should be specified by the sales department.

Paperwork systems in a company are like the nervous system in the body. They ensure that the direction and intentions are kept in a reasonably co-ordinated direction. If they get into disrepute, then the systems become increasingly useless and further disorganisation will inevitably result. Treat procedural discipline as a "must" in your command. Be proud of the speed with which the work moves, and with which you and your subordinates chase up services from other areas. Ensure that you are accurate and constructive.

Remember, a complex organisation cannot be run by people without adequate and effective systems and procedures that are relevant and used.

27. Development and Specialists

Another Matter of Balancing Priorities

There are very few FLMs who do not become involved with specialists from time to time in their area of activity. These specialists can be personnel, financial, costing, production, engineering, metallurgical, chemical, work study, O&M systems, quality control, etc. At times, it must seem to the FLM that there are more specialists trying to achieve particular objectives than he has time to cope with. It can be very irritating to you as an FLM to have your plans as to how you spend your time disturbed by the activities of specialists, and you have to choose a careful course between making maximum beneficial use of specialists and avoiding being so involved in the activities which they are pursuing that the main stream of your work gets neglected.

Specialists can be of help in trouble-shooting in certain types of problem, particularly with complex technical problems; they can also be of great guidance in keeping you up to date with current company policy on a particular issue. You will get the best use of specialists if you take the initiative to involve them in your work and in your problems when you feel you need guidance, and insisting that the specialists put forward views that are directly related to the problem that you have. Using specialists is a skilful attribute which, when developed, can provide great assistance to you in getting your work done effectively and, hence, bringing credit to you for the way in which the work content of the area is improved in efficiency. There may be a tendency, however, with some specialists, to become only academically involved in your problems. You will soon recognise this type of specialist and you are well advised, in these circumstances, to try to ensure that the specialist is brought face to face with your problems in a direct way and not just in a reporting way.

Specialists can also be of great help in the way in which they have an influence on the company's policy. Consequently, when you feel that a particular policy is ill-advised, you should attempt not only to get the policy changed through your own manager, but attempt to convince the specialist concerned of the desirability of change. If you do this effectively, the specialist will go away, think about the problem and your proposed solution, and modify this so that it achieves the objective you require, but remains consistent with objectives in other areas.

Dual Role

Some FLMs are specialists, and, in these circumstances, they will be running a specialist department and have a great responsibility to see that the people who work for them, also carrying out specialist work, are correctly oriented to the real needs of the operational work of the company. There are sometimes tendencies in specialist departments to run in directions that are secondary to the real needs of the company and the specialist department appears to set up objectives of its own which are peripheral. For example, if you are running a department of accountants, make sure that the systems and procedures you introduce are relevant to the operation as a whole — they frequently are not. The specialist manager is in a very important role, one in which the orientation and attitude of the people who work for him are crucial to the usefulness of the specialist activity.

Development

In any dynamic organisation, there will always be ideas for change, whether it be change in office systems design, in methods of manufacture, organisation, training, or a whole variety of other subjects. Initiators of change always see the situation as being a comparatively simple innovation. The receivers of the change, on the other hand, usually see it as an interference with a well-established pattern which can only cause problems.

As an FLM, not only should you see that it is your job to initiate change which you yourself regard as desirable, but you will be on the receiving end of change originating from other areas. You will be faced with a conflict between the need to assist to bring about the change, and, at the same time, to get the work done that you have to get done in the normal course of events. You will have to take a positive view to ensure that your own attitude is one that welcomes change, since, instinctively, the majority of us tend to be conservative.

Unless you lean towards change, welcome it, encourage and assist it, you will almost inevitably find yourself acting as a discourager of change, even though not deliberately. Therefore, concentrate on developing a positive enthusiastic and helpful attitude to all proposals regarding change from whatever source — your subordinates, representatives, your manager and specialists — whilst maintaining a critical assessment of the real value of the ideas.

28. Communications, Consultation and Negotiation

Communications

Do you feel you could be kept better informed of what is going on in the company by your manager? In a sense, this is not a useful question, because the answer will almost certainly be "Yes". By the same token, if the same question was put to the people who work for you, the answer would also be "Yes". If this is so — and we will do well to assume it is — then, on top of all the other things you have to do, you must try to get your manager to spend some time telling you about his and the company's wider activities and to ensure that you deliberately improve the extent to which you personally spend time passing on information to your own subordinates.

One of the best ways is to spend a few minutes each day (or week or fortnight) with all the people who work for you together, telling them about your work problems, how you will try to solve them and any special requirements you have that will need their help. For example, at the beginning of the shift you might say: "Today we aim to produce 460 units. It's going to be tough because some of the supplies are going to be late. I'd like three of you to move to this area to help out until 11am, and then when the supplies arrive, I want everybody to pitch in and make up for lost time. If we do it that way I think we can complete on time."

If you have never done this, it will seem very strange to you, and you will have great difficulty in forcing yourself to do it, especially the first time. You will reflect on how much work time you may lose, on the fact that you may have no ideal place in which to do it, on the possibility of awkward questions, on the prospect of the representative using the occasion to "show off".

Ignore all these; as far as wasted time is concerned, you will probably find that you can get more done in the slightly shorter time because people are "in the picture". You can control the length of time by starting, say, 15 or 30 minutes before finishing time and making it clear that if people wish to stay on for further information, it is in their own time. Make sure that if issues of a representative nature are raised, they are not discussed, but noted for subsequent resolution with the representative(s) concerned. This is not to say that you should not speak to your people as a group about some issue(s) which is (are) or could be the subject of representative negotiation. Indeed, this also is to be encouraged where it helps, but keep it for special occasions. Make the routine meeting about work in the specific and general sense.

If this sort of meeting is unusual in your area, you will need courage to start it. Assume that the people who work for you are like you — interested in their work and the company, and grateful for the chance to hear more about it than they normally do.

If you get personal individual grievances raised, then say: "I will discuss this with you later" — and do so. If you get new issues raised that relate to a group and about entitlements, then say: "Take it up with your representative, and after that, if he wishes, I will discuss it with him." If you get issues raised which are currently the subject of discussion or negotiation, then say: "This subject is now in the course of discussion (negotiation, etc)."

Keep the routine meeting about work, your problems, your hopes, your needs. If you get questions about work that you cannot answer, say so, and try to get the answer for the next meeting.

Treat, as your first priority in the communication process, your obligation to initiate communication to people who work for you. Do not sit back and wait for your manager to involve you. This is a passive policy. By starting yourself with your own subordinates, you will inevitably bring about a situation in which you will have to learn more from your own manager in order to answer the questions that are raised by your people. Work on the assumption that you can never do enough in this field. If in doubt about communicating — do it — verbally and face to face.

Consultation

Consultation is used here to describe the activity of meeting individuals or representatives with a view to acquainting them with the courses of action that you are proposing to take, so that questions or comments they make can be taken into account by you in finalising the decisions. It is not a situation in which you are expecting to get their explicit approval; indeed, they may not be able to give explicit approval, and only expect to make such comments as seem to them relevant to the way in which the proposal affects them. When you start a process of consultation, so structure your meeting that you are not left feeling up in the air when you have made your statement and answered a few questions, and then nothing else happens. You should be able to finish such a meeting with a statement something like this: "I called this meeting to explain to you my views and intentions on the matter we have just discussed and to give you an opportunity to make any comments that you thought relevant. Now that I have received these, I can finalise my plans."

If, in the course of consultation, you decide to change your plans because you have learned of something of which you were not previously aware, or you have seen a solution that avoids a particular difficulty, do not hesitate to say so in the process of consultation and make sure that the reason you have changed your mind is known to all, since it may be that other reasons were put forward for the change which, in themselves, were not acceptable to you.

In effect, in consultation, you are starting off on the assumption that the action you wish to take is within the policy already agreed, either explicitly or implicitly, and you are giving people a chance to indicate if they feel that the action goes over the boundaries of these policies.

Negotiation

From time to time, you may wish to change agreed working practices, or implied or explicit policy. In this instance, you need, assuming you have the authority, to negotiate with the representatives of the people concerned. Make sure you have the authority to make a change, and ensure that you have a clear idea what the existing situation is before you start to implement it. Having cleared both these points, meet the representatives of the people concerned, explain your view of the existing policy, the reasons you require a change, and the proposal for the new policy. This will involve debate and discussion, and you may find it appropriate to modify your proposal. It may be that the modified proposal is one that you will want to communicate directly to the people who work for you so that the representatives can then feed back the consensus view. It may be that the representatives will wish to meet the people who work for you in order to gain the sanction they need to reach agreement. In each of these circumstances, do not hesitate to be specific about what you have decided. If you have given permission for them to have a meeting (providing you have the authority), be definite as to the amount of time allowed.

Normally, because most of us react against meeting people in large groups and speaking to them, you should seek every available opportunity to meet your own command and talk to them as a group, because, the more this is done, the more

likely you are to get better at it and the more likely they are to see themselves as part of your work team. The same procedures should be followed for negotiations which result from proposals from representatives.

It is up to you to see that the people who work for you are fully informed of the view that you hold of the situation as discussed. Do not negotiate with your subordinates as a group, but do not hesitate to communicate with them to let them know the position as you see it, and the views that have been given to you on their behalf. You may find that representatives, from time to time, object to this; when they are experienced and mature, they will encourage it and will recognise that you can put over your position more clearly and more effectively than they can put it over, and that you can deal with questions concerning the line you wish to take in a way that they could never hope to do. Equally, you cannot expect to get a genuine view of the feelings of a group of people from anybody other than a representative; even though you may get individual confidential statements about the views of groups, it is always dangerous to assume that these are accurate, particularly when they conflict with the view being put forward by the representative.

How you put your instructions, requests, views, information, etc, across is very important. Look again at section 20. on "Overtime" and see how your words can reflect your thinking in an unconscious way. Everything you say and do has at least two levels of interpretation. The first is the obvious and simple message; the second is the inference that people will abstract from how the action or message is implemented.

29. Pay — Piecework/Timework

Widely Varying Involvement and Influence

As an FLM, your position with regard to the pay of the people who work for you will vary from company to company. At one end of the scale, the position will be entirely outside your control, in that rates of pay will have been determined accurately and precisely for each individual by some system outside your own area, and which you are not able to influence except in general terms. At the other end of the scale, you may be given considerable choice in deciding the payment position of individuals within certain defined limits.

You may find yourself in a situation where people are only paid according to the time they attend work, or they may be paid according to certain results by some form of piecework system.

If you work in a system where you have little or no influence over the payment that individuals receive, your principal job is to see that the work they do is worthy of the pay they receive and to criticise and commend as necessary within this framework. If you think the payment situation is unsatisfactory, in that certain groups of people are paid inadequately compared with others, you must do your best with your manager to try to get the position corrected. If you feel that one individual or group of individuals are overpaid compared with the value of the work they do and that all your efforts to try to get greater value from them have been unsuccessful, then, once again, you must raise this with your manager and try to get some corrective action taken.

If the people who work for you are on some form of incentive bonus system, if it is a well-judged system and kept up to date, you will not have too many problems concerning the working pace and getting your subordinates to highlight production or work impediments. It is normally accepted that incentive systems do not make people work faster, but make them work more efficiently and for longer periods of time. They do, however, normally bring some distortions concerning the way in which you would like to get work done, and the way in which the people who work for you would like to work. You may find that, for example, certain types of work produce a lower bonus than others, and there will be a tendency for these jobs to get behind on schedule. There will be certain difficult jobs which you tend to give to the most skilled people, and it may be that this will cause them to have lower earnings as a result.

All of these are problems that you have to deal with in one way or another. You have to bear in mind that no payment-by-results system is perfect; in fact, most of them have very substantial deficiencies, and part of your job is continuously to draw the attention of your subordinates to the inevitability of these deficiencies, and to point out that a bonus system is really one way of the company saying to people, "Let us see if by a payment-by-results system we achieve greater output, and you can share in the benefits." This is often seen by people, after a period of time, as a means whereby payment can be increased by negotiating on the various inadequacies (and there will always be plenty of these) so that there is a continuous drift in the earnings for no further increase in output. It is your job, as an FLM, to counter this and to keep in the forefront of everybody's mind the basic intention of the system. If once you allow yourself to get involved in small negotiations over petty points in a payment system, you will be lost in terms of the freedom you have to spend your time on other matters.

This is not to say, of course, that there will not be problems occurring which you will have to resolve, particularly as work-mix changes and the system becomes comparatively unsuitable.

Piecework Problems

Where the nature of the work on a piecework system does bear unfavourably on certain individuals, you must do your best to try to ameliorate these factors, particularly if the individuals are working in the way that you would wish, for example, on difficult work, on samples, on training other people, etc. You must also take a rigid line concerning interference with the required delivery schedule, and make sure that no issues of payment difficulty are allowed to interfere with this programme.

Quality is another matter which, in a piecework system, can be a problem for you. It may be that there is a quality bonus; it may be that the system pays only for "good work". In any event, you must ensure that the objective of each individual is clearly understood, i.e. to produce good work.

Piecework Advantages

One of the main advantages of piecework, or payment-by-results systems, is that they cause people to look naturally for the most effective way of getting work

done, and seek to remove all the impediments that prevent them from getting their work done. Thus, you will find that each person, with varying degrees of competence, becomes his own methods study officer and will be the first to complain to you of inadequacies in the way in which work comes to him or how the facilities operate. He will be upset if you do not do something about it, and will claim some compensation in the way of money to make up for his lost earnings. This attitude is an important point to be used by you for improving production and you must always be responsive to approaches on these matters.

Timework Pros and Cons

If the people who work for you are paid on a timework basis (i.e. paid according to the time for which they attend), you will have few of the problems of interference with delivery schedules mentioned under the piecework system, nor will you have repetitive problems or arguments concerning minor inequalities in the payment system. You will, however, have to recognise that the motivation provided by the piecework system for the methods improvement and for the removal of production impediments is no longer the same. You will have to persuade the people who work for you to act just as if they were under a piecework system. They must be made to feel that you expect them to draw your attention to the difficulties that cause them to work at a slower output than they might otherwise do. You must also expect them to be mindful of the way in which they do their work and to be on the lookout for better ways of doing it. This is not easy and is the major cause of falling off in production timework systems. You need not make as much difficulty of this subject as FLMs frequently do, in that if you set about the establishment of a culture in which it is understood that everybody is expected to look for better methods and for the removal of production difficulties, you will be well on the way to achieving the best of both worlds.

Payment Principles

If, as you probably do, you have influence over the payment of individuals, this will be a useful attribute for you in the motivation of people. It will also be a subject that they will raise with you concerning the opportunities that you can give them to earn more. This subject will certainly be one of potential difficulty if you do not tackle the matter straightforwardly and rigorously. Here are a few points to remember:

(1) You should not be obliged to train and pay somebody for work for which you see no need for the individual to be able to do.

(2) No individual should, as a matter of right, expect that he will automatically progress through to the top of whatever bracket in which he is paid without making the progress in work that a change in pay implies. He does have the right, however, to expect that such opportunities as there are for people to advance be spread fairly.

(3) If somebody is performing below the level of pay which he is receiving, it is your job to ensure that he knows he is under criticism for this level of performance.

(4) If certain individuals are required by you to improve their standard and thus qualify for a higher level of payment, you must make clear to them the standard you expect them to reach and give them progress reports on how you see their achievement. When they reach the standard, pay them.

(5) If one of your subordinates has a dispute with you about the fairness of your judgement of his value, then:
   (a) make sure you know the facts about what he can do and what he is doing;
   (b) make sure you know the payment policy within which you are to operate, and
   (c) make sure you are not acting in any personally biased way against the individual.

   Having done these, state your views clearly and firmly.

(6) If you and your manager have a disagreement about the appropriate levels of pay of one of your subordinates, recognise that whilst you have the greater knowledge of how the individual performs, your manager will have greater knowledge of appropriate pay levels in a wider sense and will also have a view about your judgement. Debate the issue clearly, and, once a decision is made, never indicate to your subordinate that you have changed your views. By the same token, never promise or hint about a change that needs your manager's approval before you have the approval. Do not try to gain popularity by saying: "If I had my way I would have paid you more," or, "I recommend more." This is not a question of loyalty; it is simply that, in a company of several groups of people, one FLM is just not in a position to be able to exercise complete discretion. Your knowledge of performance and your manager's knowledge of pay levels combine to enable a decision to be made. Remember, also that your opinion will be more highly valued by your manager if he knows you are dealing with overpaid performance effectively and continuously, as well as proposing changes to increase pay.

30. Leadership and Motivation of a Group

The Requirements

This is a subject about which many hundreds of books have been written. In a sense, it is what this book is concerned with. For our purposes, if you have the confidence to use your natural social abilities, to remember the basics, and that your subordinates will probably react like you do in any given situation, that is all that is required. The basics are:

(1) knowing what you want to achieve;
(2) detecting the desires of the group;
(3) judging the toleration of the group for different styles of behaviour;
(4) assessing the various solutions to the impediments to the achievement of the group and your objectives, and
(5) communicating the chosen course of action within the behavioural restraints, so that it can be seen as a step to achieving group objectives.

All these need to be done against a background that assumes that group desires and behavioural restraints are fluid and can be changed. This latter aspect is a great skill in motivation — a word which can sound manipulatuive and callous, but which is continuously used by effective leaders at all levels.

Some managers have a natural "feel" for other people, but all can benefit from the conscious exercise of sensitivity about the interests of other people, their ambitions, problems and anxieties, and work in a constructive way to harness the maximum possible contribution from all. This does not mean you have to be a "wet nurse" to all (indeed, some people thrive in a highly authoritarian situation), but merely to be aware that you have the opportunity to affect attitudes substantially by your approach and style.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the emphasis was on developing the scientific aspects of the manager's job, and, by implication, the leadership aspects were downgraded. Many managers feel positively reluctant to exercise their leadership abilities as a result. And yet, those managers who also act as leaders stand out a mile, and they get the results. Leadership is a question of developing personal qualities and relationships which cause people to feel they are part of a team working towards mutually desirable objectives. Whatever you can do to develop these qualities in yourself will pay dividends. See whether your company runs courses in developing leadership skills, and, if so, take full advantage of them.

31. The Customer

Danger!

The larger the organisation, the easier it becomes to see customers as a mere statistic and probably a nuisance. They become people who are unreasonable if they complain of the price, who do not appreciate that quality cannot be 100 per cent, and who do not realise that even if the goods were late or not satisfactory or both, this is bound to happen from time to time. When this attitude becomes prevalent, the organisation is moving on a dangerous course. Even if you have a monopoly, if customers feel seriously dissatisfied, then, in time, they will avoid you, however long it takes.

This potential danger is always to be fought against, and your job, as an FLM, is to feel it as part of your role to take the necessary action to see that each and every customer gets what he is entitled to expect from your company. This means that in addition to your own specific tasks, you are required to look outside into other managers' areas if their service to you can cause a disservice to the customer. This is not easy and can cause conflict, but, by skill, tact and determination, you can have an effect. This approach applies to all roles, for example:

- seeing that prompt replies are made to customer's letters, telexes, phone calls;
- seeing that you and your subordinates know the quality and delivery promised, and look out for impediments to the achievement of satisfaction, and
- seeing that despatch and packing arrangements are as agreed with the customer.

It is, of course, impossible to give all customers just what they would like, but we must strive to give them that to which they are entitled.

Remember, their cash pays your wages, and that deliveries completed to their satisfaction build your security for the future.

32. How You Spend Your Time

Never Enough Time

You have more to get done that you have time in which to do it. If you do not feel this, you are either not imaginative enough to see the possibilities in your job or you are in a very unusual situation. Most FLMs, at the end of the day, realise that there are things undone that could, with advantage, have been done.

Your own time is divided up into a variety of different activities. Reflect on who decides how your time is spent. Your manager, your colleagues, your subordinates, representatives, customers, etc, all compete for your time. You have to maintain a grip on how you spend your own time and see that the real priorities get sufficient attention. You must be particularly on the alert for the very natural tendency we all have to put off doing the least pleasant parts of our job. At the end of each day, ask yourself: "Is there a difficult interview discussion with a subordinate, a colleague, my boss, a customer, a representative, a supplier, that I have put off?" Have you delayed writing a difficult report or letter? With so many demands on your time, you will find it all too easy to feel that you have to delay these jobs, because of other "priorities".

Programme your own time as best you can, and put these unpleasant tasks at the top of the list; when they are done, you will feel much more effective for the other work. Remember the main purpose of your role. See that effective use of the company's resources in your care is achieved today — almost nothing is more important than this. "Effective use" is making direct progress to your main objectives. Some examples are:

- in production, the creation of a finished product for sale;
- in sales, the quotation actually going to the customer and the customer's order being received;
- in accounts, the invoice going to the customer, and
- in development, when the new method or product is being used successfully.

33. Restrictive Practices

Erosion of Security

It is probable that you work in an organisation where there are some restrictive practices. If this is so, it is regrettable and you may not be able to do a lot about it, especially in the short term. However, if you and your colleagues tackle it continuously, you may be able to help to produce some improvement. Certainly, in your own interest, you should be aware that whenever this occurs, gradually the company's viability and security are being eroded away.

There are some restrictive practices that have, as one of their objectives, the protection of the consumer. For example, in recent financial services legislation, investment advice can only be offered by registered advisors to protect the public

from "cowboys". In this sense, restrictive practices are necessary. They almost never occur within a company in industry or commerce, in the sense that management can be assumed to be competent at judging capability and accountable for so doing.

Industrial restrictive practices come in many forms. Basically, they are any attitude that prevents the skills of people and the investment in facilities from being used in the most effective way. Elimination of restrictive practices does not, of course, mean that people are asked to work with undue effort, for unreasonable hours or unsafely. Here are a few types of restrictive practices:

- conditional overtime;
- over-manning;
- not using the full output potential of investment;
- job demarcation;
- limitation on bonus earnings;
- limits on how many machines one person may work;
- resistance to changed methods and office procedures;
- reluctance to move to other work sections on the same site;
- supervisors or staff nor permitted to work machines (e.g. for test, training and development), or
- competent people not permitted to do certain work because they are not "skilled" (time served).

See how many more you can list.

Before deciding that a restrictive practice exists, ensure that there is not some sound "work" reason for the apparent restrictive practice. For example:

- the machine may not work properly at higher outputs and may need development, or
- safety may be in jeopardy if inexperienced people operate equipment.

Unfortunately, the position may be blurred, in that, for example, the new method will not work yet; it needs perserverance to get it to work. You may feel that this aspect is over-emphasised and that, given no covert restrictive practice, it could soon be made to work. Or you have to use an extra person initially until the process has been finalised, and then you never seem to be able to run it with the planned number of people, etc.

Historical Reasons

It is quite likely that the restrictive practices have strong roots in the past, may be a local tradition, and probably go back to the time when owner/managers were making high profits, paying low wages, and not using the profits to develop the business. In these circumstances, people felt that the only way they could produce any sort of defence of their employment was to combine and avoid unemployment by insisting that work be done a certain way.

This was an understandable attitude when most of the world was underdeveloped, and there was no serious international competition. However, nowadays, only the fittest companies can survive, those equipped with modern machinery operated by the minimum number of people. You should try to see that the machinery is worked for the longest time possible with the least number of people. If restrictive practices are prevalent in your organisation, it really needs a bold initiative by the top management to try to get at the root of the problem, namely, insecurity; but what can you do? First, you should stop shutting your eyes to what goes on. Second, make sure that your manager and his manager know. Third, speak up when others blame the unions. Say that it is up to management to tackle the problem (why management? because nobody else can really do anything). Fourth, use every opportunity to try to cause the people who work for you, and especially their representatives, to see that by their action they are likely to bring about the very problem they fear, i.e. insecurity.

Keep on about this danger to your organisation. This is another instance where you will shrink, but do not shirk from having your say.

If you work for an organisation which is apparently protected from the consequences of restrictive practices, do not imagine that it does not matter. The problem must still be tackled, or, in the long run, it will spread, and the effect will be a fall in the living standards for all.

A Hindrance to Improvement

In the long run, security is created by competitiveness; it is never absolute and permanent. It must be earned. This means constant effort to improve. Restrictive practices are a drag on this process, yet they have the same objective. They are born of anxiety that the security of the company may mean insecurity for some people. This needs tackling by top management because an insecure company can never provide security.

This is a problem no one wants to tackle, but all wish others to do something. Remember, do not join the conspiracy to keep it all quiet. Expose it; argue against it; stimulate top management to act. It may take years to change it — which is all the more reason to start now.

Sometimes individuals — perhaps they have a "chip on their shoulder" about lack of promotion or some other problem — become a bit awkward. They seem to look for opportunities to say "that is not my job", etc. Try to understand their view, but do not give up or wait too long for a change. You must insist on a co-operative attitude. If you let slip on this one, others will feel aggrieved and feel right to assume this type of behaviour is acceptable to you.

34. Rights and Duties

It is worth reflecting on the interaction of rights and duties. Most individuals are not slow to see that they "get their rights". If they are, representatives often do this for them. You should see that there is a recognition of the obligation to perform the duties which, in principle (if not in practice), sanction the "rights".

For example, here are a few:

Right	*Duty*
A fair day's pay	A fair day's work
Sick-pay scheme	To attend when well
Career prospects	To give a return for training
Airing grievances and use representatives	To use only for the purpose intended
As a representative — to spend time off normal work	To try to see that normal work does not suffer
To plan leisure time	To accept inconvenience in emergencies
Some security	To be willing to be flexible in work
To look for a better standard of working conditions	To assist the introduction of more economic facilities
To strike	To use it only as a last resort.

Some few individuals — usually those most conscious of the "duties" — are neglectful of their "rights". You must see that they, of all people, get them.

35. Assistants

Some of you who are FLMs will have assistants. The problem we met in section 1 concerning job title is similar in this situation. Your assistants may be called charge hands, supervisors or leading hands, etc, but because of the lack of consistent meaning we will use the title assistant first-level manager (AFLM). The real distinction between an FLM and an AFLM is that the AFLM is not accountable for action with regard to dismissal, selection, promotion, pay, disciplining. This does not mean that your AFLM may not raise these matters with you; it is just that he is not accountable for taking decisions about them.

This preamble leads on to the most important point to make about AFLMs. Do not let them drift into acting as FLMs with regard to the face-to-face management of people who work for you. This can quite easily happen. Your AFLM may be ambitious and may want to get some experience as an FLM; you might be tempted to help and may give him some of these difficult things to do (that you would rather avoid?). If you allow this, it will probably have serious consequences. The AFLM will almost certainly do it badly; your subordinates will resent it; the AFLM may not do it and not tell you. There are many ways in which it can go wrong. You must let no one interfere with the direct relationship and access between you and your subordinates on the subjects of performance, pay, prospects, disciplining or selection.

The work of the AFLM is best oriented to programming, training, troubleshooting, development, etc. Keep it this way.

36. Disciplining and Dismissal

Failure? Whose Fault?

This section has been left to the end, since, if the FLM carries out the other aspects described in this book, the requirement for disciplining and dismissal

will be substantially reduced, if not eliminated. Clearly, if selection, training and motivation of people is good, there is no need for disciplining and dismissal. When individuals are performing their work badly and there seems no prospect of their improving to be satisfactory, this is as much, if not more, the fault of management as of the individuals themselves. However, from time to time, such situations do occur and this section is devoted to the means by which they should be handled.

Whether or not an FLM has the authority to dismiss from the organisation or whether he only has the authority to say that the individual must be transferred, does not affect the basic issue, in that the FLM is saying: "I can no longer be accountable for the work of this individual within the work objectives I have been given." Each organisation will have its own internal procedures to differentiate transfer and dismissal. In referring to dismissal in this section it should be taken to include internal transfer.

In most of industry, the FLM has very few sanctions that he can apply to individuals, except that of dismissal and, because this is so final, he should only move to it having gone through the appropriate procedures to try to avoid it. The cardinal feature is, first, to ensure that the individual whose performance is inadequate is fully aware of this fact and of the standard he has to achieve to make it adequate. If persistent efforts to get the situation improved fail, then you, as the FLM, must make it clear when this is so, and that the failure is so important as to make it a matter of dismissal if the improvement does not take place. Whilst these processes have been going through, you should also be seeking alternative work, either in your own command or in other parts of the company, that the individual may be more suitable to carry out. You should also have discussed this matter with your own manager and the personnel specialist, if there is one. In the final analysis, when a situation reaches the point where you are convinced that you have done everything you reasonably can to get the individual to perform satisfactorily and you feel there is no prospect of this being achieved, you must terminate his employment within your command. Depending on the policies of your company, this may represent termination of employment with the company, or it may result in some other policy being invoked.

Written Notes

When having conversations with subordinates whose work is unsatisfactory, it is always a good plan for you to make notes on paper beforehand of what it is you need to say and to make sure you say it all. It is all too easy for managers to neglect to say the unpleasant things and to gloss over the difficult points. If this happens, it is doing the individual an injustice, in that the full gravity of the situation and the opportunities have not been put to him clearly. Most FLMs will find that they have to force themselves to do this job properly, and the discipline of writing down, and making sure that all is said, is one way of going through the process effectively. In suggesting that the matter is written down, there is no implication that the subject should be dealt with in correspondence. It is always far preferable to deal with it on a face-to-face basis, although it may be more difficult; correspondence should be avoided as an alternative to face-to-face contact where possible. In these stressful situations, it may be the policy of the company that a representative is present; in any event, it is always worthwhile inviting the member

concerned to have his representative present if he wishes. If the offer is refused, it is no bad idea to inform the representative that you have had a discussion with the individual on a subject which you judged he might wish to have the representative present, and that he refused to invite him.

If your company operates a policy of transfer for unsuitable people, it means that you, as an FLM, from time to time will be approached to take somebody who has been transferred out of another FLM's command. Your instinct will cause you to be cautious. But you must also try to be helpful. The world is full of people who have failed in one environment and succeeded in another. The ease with which transfer by you can be carried out will be a direct relationship to the co-operative attitude of the FLMs in your organisation to be prepared to give a chance to the "transferees" of other FLMs.

Suspension is a practice used for disciplining in some companies. It is best used in a situation where dismissal seems probable, where time is needed to investigate thoroughly, while at the same time, the presence of the individual on the job during the enquiry is undesirable. In this case, it is "suspension pending possible dismissal". As a sanction in itself, it can be counter-productive when the work the individual would have done is required to be done, and the suspension damages the company, as well as denying work and pay to the individual.

Do not let the existence of legislation in itself deter you. Clearly, you must behave within the spirit, as well as the letter of the law, and if you follow the principles outlined in this book you should not expect severe difficulties.

37. Conclusion

If you have managed to survive the reading of the previous sections, you will have come to the conclusion that the job of FLM is by no means easy, and is crucial to the success of any operation.

If you do all the work well, do not assume that you are necessarily right for promotion to a higher level job; equally, do not assume that managers doing higher-level jobs adequately could do your job as well as you can. The qualities required to be a first-class FLM, although in many ways similar to the qualities required in any management job, are noticeably different in certain important characteristics. The biggest damage that most FLMs face is the assumption that, because they are responsible for a comparatively small part of an operation, they can have little effect. In fact, the reverse is the truth. The FLM of an organisation, working effectively, can make all the difference between success and failure.

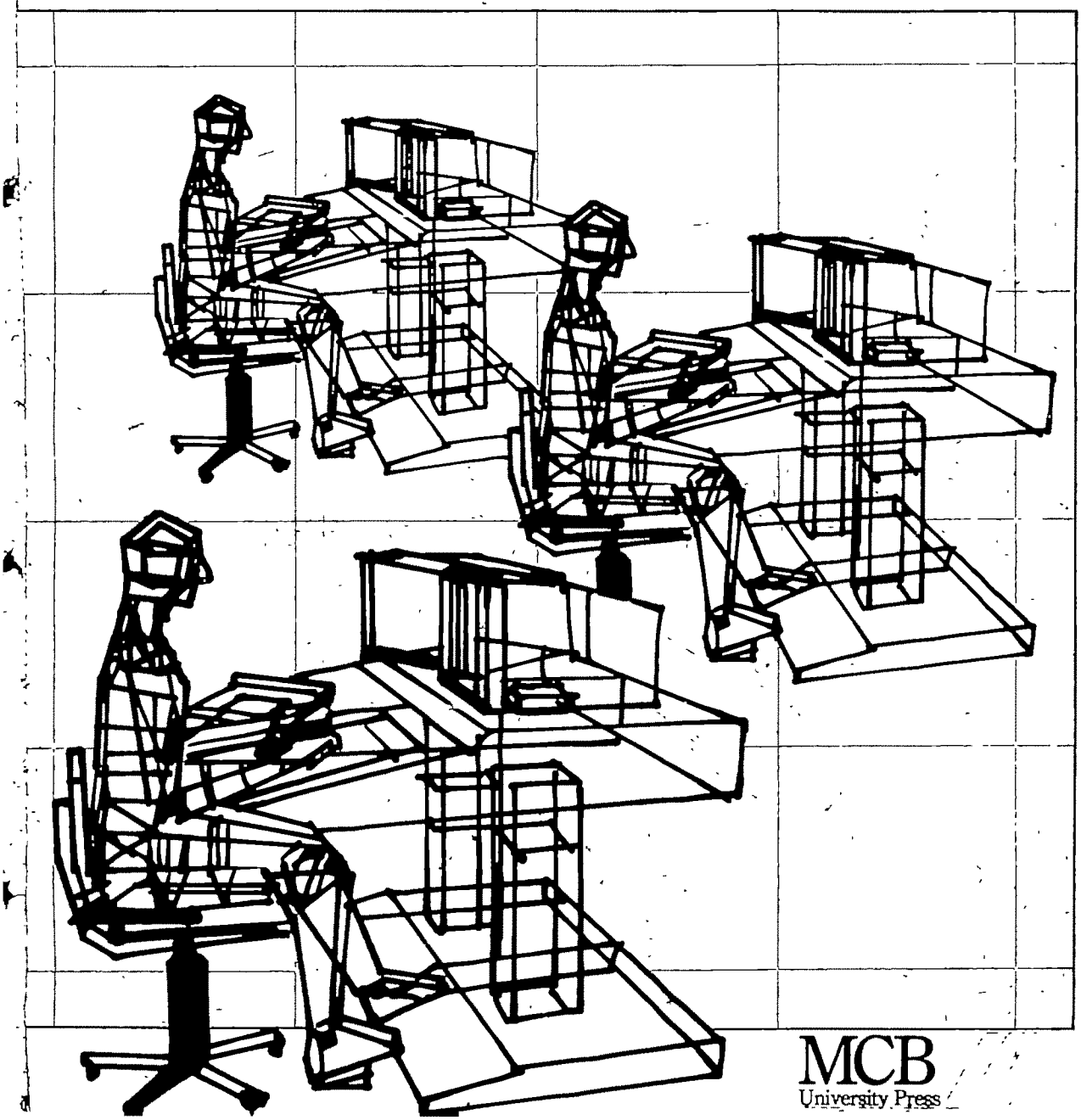
Finally, some of the standards set out are very high, and it will be impossible for you to achieve them all for one reason or another. This does not alter their desirability, or your need to strive for them. Do not be discouraged if you fail to reach some of the managerial objectives; by continuously working for them you can only improve on what otherwise would have been. The lowest standard you accept from anybody can reasonably be assumed by others to be the standard you will tolerate from all.

Good luck — you are vital to industry and commerce. Hold your head high: be proud of your job, and derive pleasure from tackling the difficult parts. Remember, we all shrink — but we must see we do not shirk!

Customer First — The Independent Answer

edited by John Peters

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

John Peters is an Associate Director of MCB University Press, and an Industrial Fellow of the International Management Centres — Europe. His background includes advertising and journalism. Currently editor of the journals *Management Decision*, *Management Bibliographies & Reviews* and *Top Management Digest*.

SERIES EDITOR

John Peters

Customer First — The Independent Answer

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A Radical Alternative in Management Education

by Gordon Wills

Business Schools, Distance Learning, Management Education

Tomorrow's world is often discontinuous. A company's technological lead in the market-place based on patents, or a protected place based on barriers to entry by international competition such as banking and financial services, may have gone. Tomorrow requires a resource not solely of chemical engineers or bank technicians, but negotiators and entrepreneurs. The action learning approach developed by IMCB, the International Management Centre from Buckingham, is described.

The Customer First — Faculty Last Approach to Excellence

by Gordon Wills

Action Learning, Business Schools, Management Education

Action learning as an approach to management development is now beginning to replace conventional classroom instruction. The International Management Centre from Buckingham is a leader in the field and examples of how it works with major organisations are described.

The "New MBA" — What It Means for Managers

by John Peters

Education, Management Development, Training

An overview of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) is presented, followed by an account of the new-style MBA; what it offers, its advantages and the cost. Two new MBA programmes are assessed and compared.

Wealth Creation through Management Development

by Gordon Wills

Business Schools, Management Courses, Management Development, Managers

The personal views on why management development should be top of the agenda for all top managers are presented by one of the most successful salesmen of in-company MBA programmes, who is also principal of the rapidly expanding International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB).

Management by Degrees: A Case Study in Management Development

by James Espey and Pauline Batchelor

Action Learning, Alcoholic Drinks Industry, Management Development

International Distillers & Vintners (UK) Ltd and the International Management Centre from Buckingham together devised an MBA programme that was custom-made for the company's needs. Our 18-month part-time action learning programme that developed their learning skills while also being closely focused on — and benefiting the company itself — was successfully completed by 13 executives.

Allied Irish Bank in Britain: Organisational and Business Development through Action Learning

David Seekings talks to Brian Wilson

Action Learning, Banking, Bank Marketing, Organisational Development

The General Manager of the Allied Irish Bank (AIB) in Britain is interviewed about a unique three-year organisational

and business development project which fundamentally altered the bank's approach to its British market. Although the project was incomplete at the time of the interview, the bank was already benefiting from an upsurge in business activity, while the parent in Dublin was adapting the process for its use in Dublin.

Marketing and Selling at Work: The IMCB/NatWest Management Development Programme
by Gordon Wills and Abby Day
Bank Marketing, Distance Learning, Management Development, Managers, Selling, Training

How the International Management Centre from Buckingham developed a unique marketing and selling training programme for the National Westminster Bank is described. Using distance teaching methods, specially developed resources and a cascade approach to training, IMCB helped the bank to train managers in both domestic and international divisions. A change both in attitude and practice among bankers, marketing managers and staff throughout the bank was the most important result.

Developing Skills for Matrix Management
by Alan Mumford and Peter Honey
Management Development, Matrix Management, Motor Industry, Organisational Change

Part of a major change project, undertaken by Ford of Europe Product Development Group and organised by the authors, is described in order to provide further evidence on the opportunity to change the boundaries between "real management development" on the job and "unreal management development" off the job, which, it is argued, is the core of IMCB's approach.

An Action Learning Approach to Performance Review and Development
by Jonathan Coates
Action Learning, Business Schools, Management Development, Performance Appraisal

An account of how the London Borough of Bromley introduced an approach to management development from autumn 1985 to spring 1986 is presented which was based around a performance appraisal mechanism (which they called Performance Review). The scheme was a management by objectives type appraisal system, based on agreed objectives, using minimal paperwork and no scoring or box-ticking systems.

The Problems of Developing Managers in the Small Firm
by David Sutton
Action Learning, Management Development, Small Businesses

The perceptions of a set adviser after working through an action learning programme in a small firm are presented, followed by those of the "clients" and the "participants". The design and operation of the programme, necessary because of the company's spectacular growth, are also described.

Learning in Style — Reflections on an Action Learning MBA Programme
by Brian Caie
Action Learning, Communication, Management Education

The experiences of a member of the first London set to complete the action

learning MBA programme with IMCB are described. Based on the concluding logbook summary submitted as part of the course requirements, it reviews the effectiveness of the learning experience throughout the 18-month course, looking at the opportunities to use various styles of learning in different parts of the programme, while some insights into the usefulness of action learning as an approach to an MBA degree programme are provided.

The Learning Equation: An Introduction

by Reg Revans

Action Learning, History, Learning

How history, novelty and a range of sources have contributed over the years both to the author's ideas and his style of writing about them are described. Some of the finer points of P and Q — programmed learning and questioning insight, the latter being the fundamental prerequisite of action learning — are presented.

Effectiveness in Management Development

by Alan Mumford

Effectiveness, Management Development

Three different aspects of effectiveness in management development are drawn together and claimed to be of major importance: effective managerial behaviour, effective learning processes and development processes emphasising effectiveness. Issues of action rather than required knowledge are what is required for success, and by taking issues of effectiveness as the prime focus of a development activity, many managers would be engaged more sympathetically.

Developing Managers for the Board

by Alan Mumford

Learning, Management Development, Managerial Effectiveness

The results of a major survey of the processes of developing effective managers are examined. The questionnaire-based analysis was conducted by IMCB and involved 144 directors. Individual directors were asked to describe the processes which had influenced their development, and the information attained was compared with organisational objectives.

Managerial Linking Skills

by Charles J. Margerison and Dick McCann

Leadership, Management Development, Managers, Team Work

All managers are accountable for the development and co-ordination of their team, and yet many have considerable difficulty in getting their team to work at a high performance level. It is argued that the role of the manager as a co-ordinator and integrator is crucial to the success of the team.

Achieving the Capacity and Competence to Manage

by Charles J. Margerison

Career Development, Experience, Management Development, Promotion

The importance of a career today is taken for granted, just as acquiring a trade was taken for granted in the days when craftsmanship was the basis for securing lifetime employment in a prestigious role. Career roles related to organisational levels and performance criteria are examined, particularly as concerns managers.

Editorial

by
John Peters
Bradford, England, 1988

In the early 1980s, when IMCB*, the International Management Centre from Buckingham first opened its doors, its founders launched it as "an idea whose time had come". With hindsight, the idea's time hadn't quite come and it took a Herculean expenditure of energy and effort by its founders, and the small and devoted core of staff, to make their vision into reality. That they did so in the face of cynicism and occasionally hostility from much of the management education establishment is a tribute to them — and their first customers.

For "customer first" was and is the guiding principle behind IMCB, and, in putting this worthy dictum into effect, some toes were trodden on, some conventions broken. Customers, though, noticed the difference, and responded. IMCB hit upon an engaging mixture of enthusiasm, iconoclasm and idealism, shot through with utter professionalism and hard-nosed commercial instincts, which was, and still is, a formula which turned customers into converts and advocates.

The political time for IMCB could be said to have come also in the UK, as Thatcherite policy set to work on deregulation of the state institutions, education amongst them. Again though, IMCB was a little premature in 1982/3. It has only been in the late 1980s, as the British Government starts to ask its business education providers not only to give a better service to industry, but to trade at a profit as well, that many of the original disparagers look at, and copy, the ways in which IMCB has done just that.

In the manner of all innovators, IMCB has taken risks, and in being amongst the vanguard of customer-focused providers of management education and development, its successes are copied, and its mistakes avoided. Someone has to be first, however, and initiatives such as CIMAC, the Conference of Independent Management Centres, has shown that rivals, as well as colleagues, recognise IMCB's willingness to boldly go where no business school has gone before.

This compilation tells a part of the story of IMCB, its philosophies, and describes some of its programmes.

Its Principal and driving force, Dr Gordon Wills, features heavily in the articles in this compilation, and invidious though it is to single out individuals, his has been the entrepreneurial spirit which turned the well-intentioned statements of intent of many in the business school world into actuality. He is the initiator and premier salesman of the in-company MBA programme, something that has become recognised as a logical next step for management development providers.

*On 1 June 1988, IMCB dropped the B for Buckingham from its title as it formally joined forces with other major schools worldwide. It is now simply known as IMC, The International Management Centres, to reflect its multinationalism.

The other name to be separated from the others must be Reg Revans, the "inventor", or at least populariser, of the educational philosophy known as "Action Learning". Using the work place as a laboratory, learning to draw on the skills of colleagues, bosses and subordinates, as well as tutors, learning not just from experience but how to make experience into a continuous learning tool, have become central to IMCB's philosophy. These tenets have been practised, frequently with few supporters, by Reg Revans since the war. It must be gratifying although frustrating to him, now in his 80s, that the essence of his management philosophy has finally been seen as the "new way" to develop senior managers.

One hopes that when the history of business schools, in particular, and business education, in general, comes to be charted, the names of Wills and Revans will be writ large.

This collection is divided into three roughly equal parts. Part One, *The IMCB Story*, outlines four "philosophy statements" taken from different stages in IMCB's development. "A Radical Alternative..." by Gordon Wills, gives a fascinating insight into the mechanics of structuring programmes for corporate clients. "Customer First — Faculty Last", also by Wills, covers some case stories, and outlines "differences" in IMCB's approach. "The New MBA", my own piece, is a comparative study of IMCB's way of running MBA programmes with that of one of the more prestigious and innovative public sector operators, The City University Business School. "Wealth Creation through Management Development", again by Gordon Wills, outlines IMCB's investment and return-on-investment-oriented approach to management development.

Part Two, *Confirming Cases*, looks at seven separate case studies. James Espey and Pauline Batchelor explain how International Distillers and Vintners used IMCB's in-company MBA programme as a strategic part of their development for the future. It is a fascinating piece, and in "Management by Degrees", Espey's IDV programme proved the forerunner for a whole series of corporate MBAs with Seagram, Dupont, ICI Australia, Allied Irish Bank, ASPA Malaysia, Arthur Young and Metal Box. James Espey himself, at present with the United Distiller Group, became such an advocate that he now chairs IMCB's Council.

In similar vein, David Seekings and Brian Wilson, CEO of Allied Irish Bank UK in "Allied Irish Bank in Britain" describes how Wilson used IMCB's programmes as a change agent to help his organisation succeed in the increasingly competitive banking world. Gordon Wills and Abby Day also tell a banking story in "Marketing and Selling at Work", which charts the progress of IMCB with NatWest.

In "Developing Skills for Matrix Management", Alan Mumford and Peter Honey describe their work with Ford Europe, and Jonathan Coates, an Industrial Fellow of IMCB who runs his own successful consultancy, describes the action learning programme run with the London Borough of Bromley in "An Action Learning Approach...".

David Sutton, a veteran action learning proponent and long-time colleague of Reg Revans, outlines the work he and IMCB did for IMCB's original parent, MCB University Press. MCB, the publishers of this collection, are an out-of-the-ordinary, highly successful publishing operation whose success partly sponsored

IMCB in its early days. "Developing Managers in a Small Firm" is an entertaining and elegant story of a quite unusual action learning programme.

Finally in this section, "Learning in Style" is a participant's picture of IMCB's MBA programme. Written by Brian Caie of Mobil Oil, a member of the first IMCB MBA intake, it provides a tightly written personal view of the demanding and rewarding programme which 200 have now graduated from at the time of writing.

Part Three, *Further Thoughts*, features contributions by three quite outstanding management development philosophers and practitioners. Reg Revans' "Learning Equation" is just one example from the many I could have selected outlining his thoughts on action learning.

Alan Mumford's MSC-sponsored work on developing directors is of seminal importance, and his "Effectiveness in Management Development" and "Developing for the Board" outline some of the thought and practice he has brought to IMCB, most especially in the areas of learning styles and learning to learn, and working with senior managers.

Charles Margerison, of the University of Queensland, has made particular contributions with his work on teams and the ways we work in them. "Managerial Linking Skills" covers a part of the major work he and co-author Dr Dick McCann have undertaken in this field. "Achieving the Capacity and Competence to Manage" is a typically clear-cut statement on management development, and an appropriate note to end this collection.

Finally, a personal note of thanks to all who helped with this compilation. I am an MBA graduate of one of the best of the UK's traditional business schools, the University of Bradford Management Centre, but, it would be fair to say, I am a convert to the IMCB way of doing things and have been since I came into contact with them. My membership of IMCB's Industrial Faculty as a Fellow is something I carry with pride. I believe IMCB goes into the 1990s as an idea whose time finally ***has*** come, and, along with many hundreds of its Industrial Faculty, graduates and clients around the world, watch their "Customer First" policy with expectations of the most far-reaching success.

Part One: The IMCB Story

A Radical Alternative in Management Education

by
Gordon Wills
International Management Centres, UK

Introduction

Imagine Henry, a mid-career, successful, rising manager, aged 35. He's in the thick of week-by-week activity and participating in the development and implementation of the company's annual and three-year rolling plans. The phone rings and the Human Resource Executive Adviser says to Henry, "We've been considering sending you on a general management course. The one we've got in mind starts in four months time." Henry is silent. "Well, I'd like to think about it. Where is it? How long does it last?" Henry gets the answers to his two questions, and thinks. He talks it over at the weekend with his wife and on Monday with his boss. They both say it's an honour, a sign of recognition of potential. Henry should go. So Henry says "Yes"; and off he goes, for eight months as it turned out, 400 miles from home.

When Henry got back to work, after eight months, his boss enquired how he had got on: "Have a good time?". "Yes", Henry replied. "Some excellent teachers and a lot of good contacts amongst the participants." "You must tell me all about it sometime" said the boss. "Nice to see you back, Henry."

Getting back to work was an easy process. There was no great pile of paperwork on the desk. Henry had even had an office move whilst he had been away. After four months, he was well back into the business routine, busy as hell, and enjoying it all greatly. The eight months away had been a great help, he believed. Colleagues looked at Henry in a different light.

Henry's tale is not just a freak story. It is almost universally typical. It is the way that companies and their management education suppliers have organised things. We are comfortable with it. It is mid-career management education. There are thousands of Henries. They are comfortable with it.

My proposition is that despite Henry's comfort and our comfort with it, it is a gigantic waste of resources. Management education of a successful 35 year old, done away from the work team and away from the realities of the challenges of the business in which he works, loses nearly all of its potency.

Theological debate about the right syllabus is futile, if the concept of right is derived solely from the body of knowledge itself.

Logistical debate about the merits and demerits of part-time versus full-time on campus or distance learning is futile if the issue considered is one of cost or accessibility.

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* This article was prepared for presentation in Australia at the 1984 Australian Management Educators' Conference in Brisbane and for further discussion at the Victoria Marketing Educators' Group in Melbourne.

The benefits of management education occur when its ideas are put into practice. What better guide to what to consider can there be, therefore, than evolving the educational process from the area of practice in which the manager operates?

Let me take this proposition and listen again to the telephone call I described earlier with Henry and his subsequent education.

(1) The Human Resources Executive Adviser was not Henry's boss—he was a staff specialist.

(2) The idea of a course was a bolt from the blue.

(3) The boss did not know about it any more than Henry—although it could have come up as a result of an appraisal scheme.

(4) The feeling generally was that being sent away was "recognition" of future potential as well as perhaps a "reward" for past performance.

(5) Out of sight, on the course, Henry was forgotten by the company.

(6) On the course, Henry had to deal with highly generalised ideas and see if they could apply to him.

(7) When he got back, he was the only one in the company who had undergone the experience. He was the odd one out.

(8) The boss was polite but hardly zealous to find out what pay-backs from the firm's investment could be expected.

(9) Henry felt comfortable and respected by his colleagues for having been favoured by being educated.

What does all this have to do with putting ideas into practice? How many of the ideas taught were:

- applicable by Henry back at work?
- actually applicable from his (new) office desk? Did anybody care on the course? Did anybody ***really*** care when he got back?

Normally the answer is not really, only superficially.

A Radical Alternative Process

Let me turn to another type of telephone call that is taking place these days. It is a radical alternative. It's not Henry now, it is Charles. He is also 35 and has the same boss structure and Human Resources Executive Adviser. But the call comes from their mutual boss to Charles's boss. "We need a stronger team of managers over the next two to five years if our corporate strategy is to be successful. I want to identify how well your staff fit into the pattern of skills needed to meet the challenges. Then I want the gaps closed. Clear? I'm going to want to see you in two months time to review what you've come up with."

Two months later, Charles's boss has read and re-read the corporate plan a dozen times. It's got many good ideas in it but frankly, the team he leads, including Charles, is on tomorrow's field of play because it tackled well the tasks of yesterday.

Tomorrow's world is often discontinuous. A company's technological lead in the marketplace based on patents, or a protected place based on barriers to entry

by international competition such as banking and financial services, may have gone. Tomorrow requires a resource not solely of chemical engineers or bank technicians but negotiators and entrepreneurs. Even the organisation structure is ill-equipped to cope. Charles's boss says so. "Thank God you've got the perspicacity to see the challenges and that we've all got to develop. That's the first hurdle straddled. This is what happens next."

Charles's boss goes on to explain that the Human Resources Executive Adviser will be collating the "perceived business challenges" all round the organisation. They will become the agenda for a debate that is due to take place with a team from IMCB — the action learning international business school from Buckingham.

IMCB has no preconceived notion of the best curriculum until the challenges have been collated from the realities of the managerial situation in which Charles finds himself—and ten to 15 other 35 year olds from the same or similar organisations. The curriculum through which the managers identified will have to work will be that which IMCB tutors and counterpart subject matter experts from Charles's own organisation can see to be appropriate, meaningful and applicable. And Charles will not be there on his own. He will be working with colleagues as he seeks to understand it against the perspective of what his own organisation believes it wants and needs to do to make the corporate strategy and plan work out, over two to five years.

In its most radical expression as, for example, recently with NatWest Bank or Westpac, or DuPont, or Ford Europe, or MY Dart, or IDV, or Dow Corning, to name but a few, Charles's entire department joins the management education process of action learning. At NatWest, it was 2,600 managers on a cascade basis; at Westpac, 200; at Dow Corning, 48; at DuPont, 31. Their education goes on for between six and 26 months, as the learning situation requires.

Action learning, as the educational process I describe is termed, involves the following:

(1) live projects of strategic significance for the company in the marketplace;
(2) live projects of key significance for the effective functioning of the organisation—what we term friction between departments and corporate integration, and
(3) tutorial work on finance, marketing operations, team management, and business strategy, dealing with each of these issues as they are exposed in the organisation.

No tutor can use standard lecture notes. Indeed, we do not call our tutors that —they are Set Advisers. Their advice runs broadly along the lines of: good research degree supervision work; dealing with references to the literature; advice on methodology, and discussing conceptual approaches. Our live projects are, however, the heart of our action learning study process. Let me explain why.

The major project on the organisation's external performance to meet strategic objectives gives managers an opportunity to participate in both the intellectual and operational equity of the firm. By setting a two-five year focus, we ensure that (barring unforeseen accidents, of which there will be some) when the process is completed, with its own in-organisation boss as Joint Supervisor, *it can be*

implemented. Action can follow the learning process to reinforce it directly.

The other two live project areas are equally fascinating. The first explores interdepartmental friction from the manager's own desk. What are the main aggravations caused by a sales manager to the finance or distribution departments? Why? What is it about their different perceptions of the world, their professional attitudes that gives rise to conflict? The emerging answers give the opportunity for the Set Advisers to tutor in their differing functional areas. It takes a skilled and very relaxed tutor to do it. But it is made immeasurably easier by the fact that the other managers studying in the group (or set, as we call it) are deliberately selected from diverse backgrounds. They have as much responsibility to tutor and advise their fellow set members as do the IMCB faculty.

The final project looks not simply at how the organisation seeks to reduce or harness the heat arising from friction, but to set super-ordinate goals or corporate objectives. How does the process of dealing with warring departmental barons and professional etiquette occur? Who does what? How? Can it be done better?

Radical Logistical Implications

I have already suggested that action learning cannot allow faculty to use regular lecture notes. Of course, 60 per cent of what will be dealt with will be common to most situations, but the way it will be said or done can seldom be more than 30 per cent the same. So for a start, you need a very flexible and mature faculty. It is no good having a permanent group that has to do 200 hours a year as a regulation work-load. For any given individual, the requirement could be as little as 30 per year. So IMCB's faculty are largely industrial and visiting faculty. This means a networking system, and a computerised database on what each individual is skilled at. We have got that far for 88 faculty.

We do have a score of full-timers but they are the educationalists who discuss and design the action learning programme for organisations.

I have not thus far mentioned another, perhaps obvious, element of this radical alternative. Charles does not leave his job for long periods of time, nor do the others from the same enterprise. Why leave your laboratory behind? Charles and his colleagues do not go away for eight months. They carry on working at their office. IMCB, apart from start-up orientation, works with them at weekends and during evening or late afternoon sessions. The venues suit the organisation's convenience, not that of IMCB.

So faculty have to be ready to work week-ends and evenings, and wherever the organisation wants to take them. Would you believe that the past six months for me has meant: two weeks in golf clubs in the UK, six weeks at Buckingham in the local hotel, two weeks in Singapore, five weeks in Brisbane, 12 nights in Harlow in Essex, a fortnight in Johannesburg and a week in Hong Kong. No wonder our Business School was aptly named the International Management Centre *from* Buckingham.

Surely, you will ask me, all this organisational work must be hazardous in the extreme without some library facilities on site, without good references? Well, of course it is. These two elements pose one of the greatest logistical problems of all—even greater than faculty. We have tackled, if not solved, it by the concept

of distance *teaching* courseware—the emphasis is on teaching by the way, even in the action learning context. Our courseware is not a multi-media correspondence course of distance learning like the Open University in Britain, it is a resource for Set Advisers to use as the catalyst for set discussions and debates. Depending on the group worked with, the emphasis changes and the discussion evolves in the most useful way possible.

Is this Really Different?

What I have described is not all that different from what a lot of fringe activists in business schools the world over do already. It is surely just a variety of experiential learning, on the job training and so forth. Well, that is right, except...

IMCB has institutionalised action learning into a business school at university level. The processes I have described are the way my colleagues and I are preparing mid-career managers up to MBA level and even to DBA level—now. And we are doing so on our own authority. That is radical, even by British standards and even though we are affiliated with Northland Open University in Canada and working closely with the College of Preceptors in Britain.

Since 1982, IMCB has stood for a complete reversal of trends in participative management education. A group of dissident academics such as myself, joined by a host of sympathetic industrial and visiting faculty on a networking basis, have invested nearly $A1 million in making this radical alternative an available alternative. There are no government funds, just the faculty's own money as loans. There is no equity to grow, just the idea that management education must take effectiveness of a manager at the right task as its focus, not scholarship. Scholarship is a means to more effective management, and we need it from those who truly are scholars. It is not an end in itself for us at IMCB.

Please do not mistake such remarks as hostility to the university world in which I worked from 1965 to 1982 at Bradford and Cranfield, Tulsa, Perth, Brisbane, Alberta and Helsinki. IMCB too has its programmes of research funded by the Department of Education and Science into the information needs of our managers and by the Manpower Services Commission into learning styles and processes. And we are keenly concerned to stay abreast of the scholarly ideas, albeit few, emerging from the university world. Most of the ideas reported in our journals are not new. They do not even have the merit of scientific replication to test hypotheses. They are irrelevant to the progress of knowledge and are mainly to do with the creation of an impressive CV.

Let's Look at Some Examples

I began with talk of Henry and of Charles. Let me show you how Henry, for example, would proceed with IMCB to do his MBA. He could be based in the UK, Belgium, South Africa, Hong Kong, the UAE, Singapore or Malaysia. In all of these places, we offer our programme. He will be working in a group of eight to 15 from his own company, or from his own wider profession, or from his own geographical area. We have all these types of MBA sets. He will always have boss and company support for the 18 months he works with us on the action learning basis. Exhibit 1 shows the structure of the MBA programme.

The first seven months involve formal working sessions against a series of projects and core subjects. It looks like a familiar enough list of syllabus topics, but it does not work like that, as I have already described. From month eight to 18, the dissertation is worked on within Henry's own organisation.

Charles, on the other hand, could be a manager in Allied Irish Banks (AIB) in Britain. If he were, the pattern of his development would be very different.

The agreed "challenge statement" for AIB Britain put the Branch or Unit Manager as the focal point for building an integrated financial services organisation from four well established divisions in industrial finance, merchant banking, retail banking and international finance. The action learning process focuses on learning how to create a business plan for his own territory in partnership with his neighbouring colleagues from the hitherto alien divisions. It lasts a total of eight months, and both bosses, bosses' bosses and directors have to join in too (Exhibit 2 shows the process).

Then we can look at Du Pont's needs as their Photo Systems UK business comes under increasing pressure from Japanese and American competitors and as their current technology gives way to electronics with X-ray, printing and industrial applications. What next? Well, for many of its 30 managers, a major reorientation is needed and for a few, progress to MBA or MPhil level over 18 months. (The flow process is described in Exhibit 3.)

For a fourth example let me take MY Dart, a small public company, with a $A50 million turnover, famous worldwide for dartboards and Halex table tennis balls. It is a company with five operating divisions. It specialises, in addition, in sports equipment, printed packaging, expanded polystyrene and pyrotechnics, i.e. bangers for the military and social occasions. Each division had a board of directors in a recovery situation beyond the recession that needed welding more effectively as a team and assisting in their development of excellent corporate plans. By May 1985, we have committed our faculty to action learn them to do that job well (Exhibit 4 shows the process).

Finally, Exhibit 5 explores action learning at work for an Australian bank in the European marketplace.

Conclusions Already

IMCB has succeeded in demonstrating that a business school can be redefined as a service institution based on customer needs and wants. Most of us have traditionally offered only a production or product-oriented definition and delivery system.

To make that redefinition happen, we had to step outside the maintained sector and place our professional reputations, our index linked pensions and our own funds up to $A1 million at risk. We had to create our own degree awarding institution as no others have done in Britain for over a century.

We had to challenge the comfortable views that government should fund university-level management education, and that scholarship was the best route to effective performance.

We had to transform faculty expectations and even reward structures—modest notions all of them. That is why my colleagues gave me the clothes peg I have

here today for these pages, bearing the wise tag: "Think small; big ideas upset people."

Actually, IMCB is a big idea but we are thinking small. After all, we only work in six countries at the moment and we have been going for over two years.

Have I upset anyone here today? Of course not. It is only relevant for Australia. We have had the AGSM (joined lately by Melbourne) as the national school showing the way for the rest of us for a decade now. Demand is buoyant, particularly at Deakin and Queensland!

My observation is this. Demand is buoyant in Britain, Singapore and Hong Kong too. But what we are doing in our non-radical, conventional way, by and large, is failing to make managers that much better. The management educational dollar must, in future, be spent so much more wisely for the mid-career manager than has been the case in the past. We must attend to cost/benefit rather than to cost/effectiveness. And I urge you to start right now with no assumptions about product or even process and with not a care in the world for your Senate or Academic Board's predilections.

Annex

Exhibit 1 Structure of the MBA.
Exhibit 2 AIB Britain Programme Structure.
Exhibit 3 Du Pont Programme Structure.
Exhibit 4 MY Dart Programme Structure.
Exhibit 5 Westpac European Division Programme Structure.

Exhibit 1.

Programme Structure

Pre-Programme Partnership

IMCB begins to work closely with prospective Associates and sponsoring organisations before the formal programme begins. A faculty member will hold discussions at the organisation's premises with the applicant and senior staff. This is done primarily to gain the co-operation of the organisation. Faculty are also working to ensure that material is relevant and the needs of the organisation are known. There then follows an application procedure with formal interviews and aptitude testing. The sponsorship of the organisation is assured before any application is approved.

Successful applicants are then briefed on a major pre-programme task—a 5,000-word monograph on their own organisation. This exercise serves to direct thinking to the Associate's current role within the organisation. It also provides material for presentation to other set members so that each gets to know a great deal about the background of his/her colleagues when the programme begins.

The Programme: A Brief Overview

The MBA extends over a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of 18 months. Associates meet formally in their sets throughout the programme. During this time they undertake five different types of written assignment, including work based on live management projects, and attend evening sessions and residential study weekends. The basic structure of the programme is illustrated below. Sets function outside working hours, with the exception of the two-week residential start-up period. Set contact time is as follows:

Sessions	Set contact hours
Two residential start-up weeks, each of 40 hours	80
Thirty evening sessions of 4 hours each	120
Six residential weekends of 16 hours each	96
Total	296

Credits

The MBA is achieved by gaining 100 credits, each of which represents 12-15 hours work—about half of which is undertaken in the organisation, in gathering and analysing data. Credits are awarded for a range of assignments, as described in the following section. The MBA is awarded at distinction, credit and pass levels. There are no conventional examinations. All credit submissions are subject to scrutiny by external university examiners.

The Programme Assignments

Experience-based learning accounts for more than half of the MBA programme, and this experience is also brought to bear on the course-based elements.

The balance of the programme is best appreciated in the light of the credits awarded for the five separate assignments undertaken:

Assignments	Degree credits
(1) Interface between functions (live study and report)	15
(2) Corporate integration of all functions (live study and report)	15
(3) Advanced study and literature review leading to Master's Project	15
(4) Master's Project (live management project and report)	30
(5) Written analysis of cases	25
Total	100

It will be seen that live study undertaken in-company, or within a public or professional body (assignments 1, 2 and 4) accounts for 60 of the 100 credits, while a further 15 (assignment 3) are directly related to a live management undertaking. The other element (assignment 5), of 25 credits, arises in connection with the formal, course-based aspect of the programme. Case studies and exercises which have a specific bearing on aspects of the syllabus are used on each of the five core courses.

The final written assignment, the Master's Project, may be submitted at the end of 12 months but it is expected that many associates will wish to take advantage of the full 18 months allowed. At the end of this period, there is a graduation weekend.

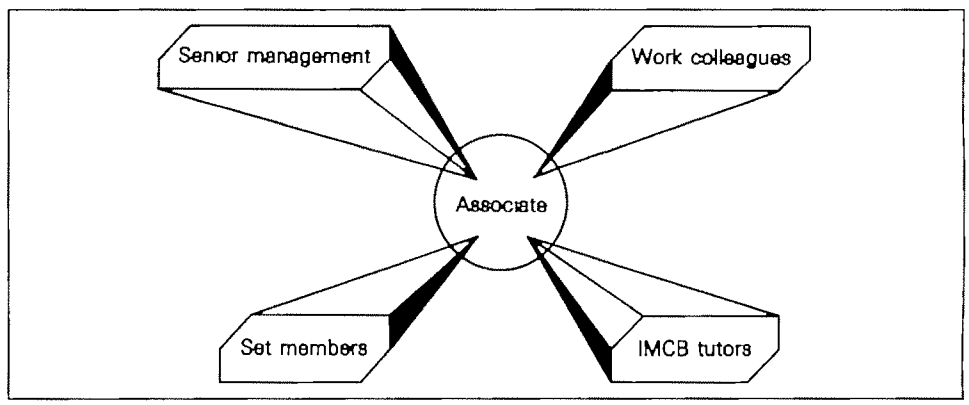


Figure 1.
The Impact on the Associate

Exhibit 2. Initial Briefing—Allied Irish Banks

AIB Britain Development Programme 1984/85

The introduction on 1 January 1984 of an integrated group structure for AIB Britain was an event of most considerable significance for all levels of AIB activities. One of the fundamental aims of the group is a customer and market-based focus for the full range of services offered by the four main arms of AIB in Britain.

The AIB corporate strategy has spelt out the broad target markets on which we will be concentrating. But between statements of strategy and profitable implemented activities, a great deal of meticulous marketing analysis, planning and control has to be done. And this in turn has to be followed by sales activities at branch and unit levels and in face-to-face relationships with existing and potential customers.

There are no easy or swift solutions. To make AIB work as an integrated financial services organisation in its chosen market-places will require a considerable programme of staff development—from top team to branch staff. What does marketing really mean for banking? How can we do it well? What does selling mean and how can we do that well? What roles can each individual play in the total offensive that AIB Britain is mounting?

It is not staff alone that need developing. Products and services must be focused and developed for the key market targets identified.

A comprehensive programme of development has now been designed by AIB Britain's Top Team in association with IMCB—the International Management Centre from Buckingham. IMCB's Centre for Banking and Financial Services has a strong track record in the UK, the Far East, the Gulf and Australasia of working with banks in increasingly competitive and deregulated environments.

Partners in Development

IMCB is not a teaching institution in the sense that its tutors "tell" others how to do it. IMCB is pledged to action learning which, stated simply, means the tutor immerses him/herself in AIB Britain's challenges and helps its own managers to work out solutions.

IMCB brings a very great marketing and sales experience to the partnership and a not inconsiderable knowledge of financial services and bank marketing. AIB Britain's management brings proven competence in banking and financial services but is ready for enhanced competence at marketing and selling. The different parts of the group have diverse distinctive competencies. This latter statement is obviously an over-simplification.

The Development Programme is wholly designed to harness the diverse skills into an integrated attack from AIB Britain's combined strengths—wheresoever they are greatest.

The Development Focus

Quite simply stated, each and every "area" of AIB Britain is to be asked to analyse, plan and act in its "area". Working with their respective regional manager, all branch and unit managers will be formed into "area teams" to build AIB Britain's financial business in their area within the agreed corporate strategies for Britain.

Each of the "area teams" will work over a six month cycle. It begins with a start-up session, lasting seven days (four days one week—three the next, to allow time for reflection on the issues).

It then proceeds to meet regularly each fortnight on its own initiative to produce its analysis, plan and action programme as AIB Britain in its area.

Finally, after six months, it presents its analysis, plan and action programme for the go-ahead and for integration into AIB Britain's total strategic framework in a one and a half day workshop with "area superiors" and IMCB faculty.

Superiors and Supporting Cast

We have deliberately identified the "areas" as the development focus. That's where the action is. But all the best work at area in the world will be of nil effect if senior

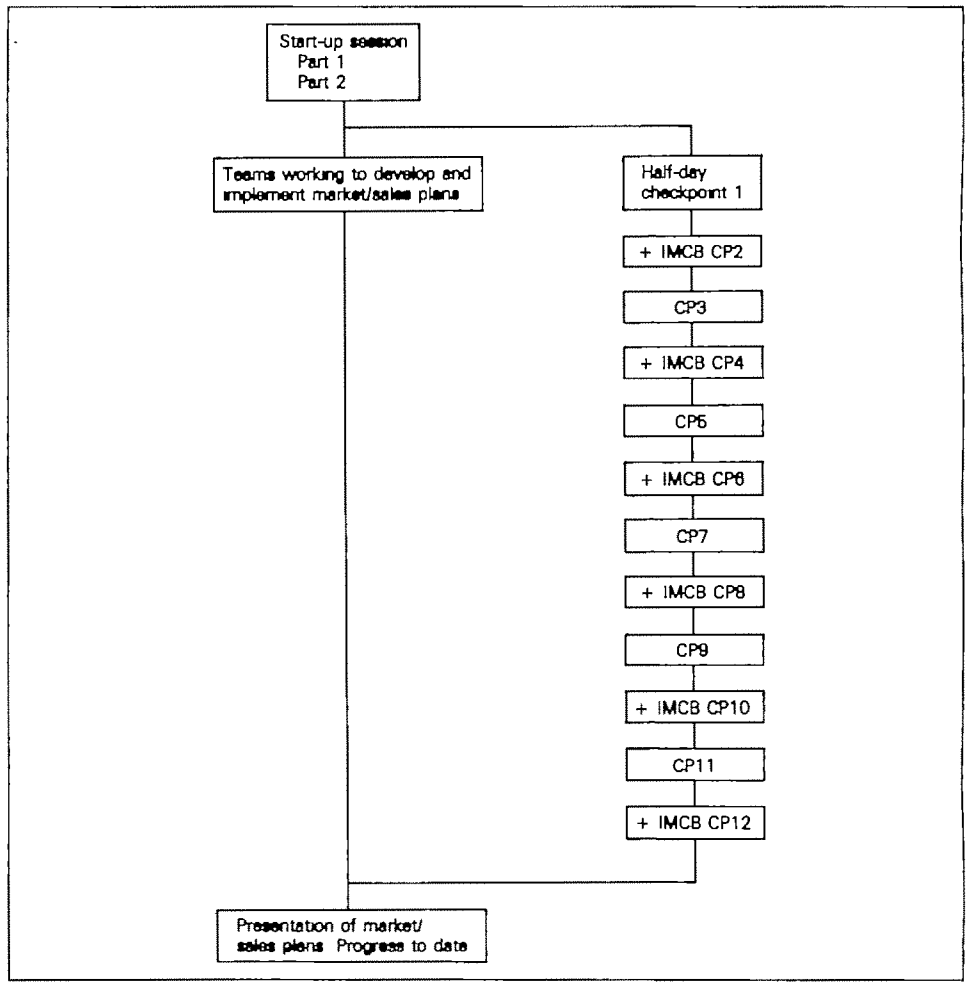


Figure 2.
Schedule of Meetings

executives and colleagues elsewhere are not onside. The entire AIB Britain Team has got to be in support and know exactly what is going ahead, and why.

(1) The Top Team of General Managers
The Group General Manager and the top team who constitute the British Management Committee have already begun to learn what marketing means for AIB. Their own workshops begin in June, led by Professor Gordon Wills, and continue with a bi-monthly briefing/progress report and a further long weekend.

(2) Regional Managers
These are the executive leaders with direct line responsibilities for the effectiveness of marketing and sales in the branches and units. These are the managers who are working with IMCB to develop the training input which will be in the start-up session for all branch and unit managers. They will be attending the sessions when their "area" is starting up. They will also have

the responsibility for seeing that the regular meetings in their "area" move along as they should, to schedule and well. If snags occur, the IMCB faculty and regional managers will be there to help resolve the issues.

Finally, at the end of the six months' process, it will be the "area" superiors who will stand alongside their area's branch and unit managers as they make their presentations to the Group Top Team.

To do this mentor job well, the regional managers concerned have been the first to attend the marketing planning and sales management programmes. Their action learning gets underway at the end of June just a short lead time ahead of their own branch and unit managers.

(3) Group Marketing Resources

The focus of the marketing development process and particularly product development will be group marketing and development, working with the designated senior marketing officer of each of the four divisions—Domestic, Industrial, International and Merchant. Together they will provide marketing support both for the development of effective marketing information systems and products to match the selected target markets as identified area by area as well as the commando sales teams in due course. Public relations and promotional support will also be co-ordinated in this way.

Once again, many of the managers in group marketing have been bankers first and marketers second. They are receiving a heavy dose of marketing training, as well as detailed coaching on new product development, marketing research and information system design and promotion.

(4) Branch Staffs in Support

It has not been overlooked that branches and units depend on assistant managers and many other staff members for many of their dealings with customers. So these managers and staff are clearly encompassed in the strategy.

Assistant branch managers will receive the necessary development and, what is more, the resources for the specific training of the staff members of their branch. "Selling Matters" is the IMCB slogan for branch and unit staff training. And it matters in terms of specific tasks that staff are asked to join in and accomplish. As such, generalised training is not the way it will go. It will be specifically linked to the sales goals agreed for action within the several "areas".

The "Area" Projects

The heart of the AIB Britain development process is the "Area Team" working out its own marketing and sales plan. This can be boiled down to three key questions:

(1) What is the banking and financial potential of the "area" in question for AIB Britain within the selected strategies?

(2) What can we do about it as an "Area Team"—who does what and how do we integrate?

(3) What is the nature of the internal problems we expect to arise in trying to achieve (2), and how can we:

(a) overcome them within our level of discretion, and

(b) seek action from above when they are outside our discretion?

The third issue is put third because it is third. Only by identifying and understanding (1) and (2) above, do we know what are genuine obstacles at (3), rather than simple frustrations.

Exhibit 3. Southampton Briefing

Photosystems (UK) Managers' Workshop

1-5 July 1984 at Meon Valley Country Club

Photosystems (UK) faces the need for management change in the next phase of its commercial development. The reasons are well known to us all, both in market-place and in technological terms. Competitor behaviour is evolving. Buyer and end-user behaviour are evolving. Technology is not only evolving but has several discontinuities staring us in the face. The senior management team that leads Photosystems (UK) knows that the period to 1986 and beyond will call for existing managers to evolve their behaviour and to enhance their professionalism yet further. Indeed, the process is now in hand and is focused on the context of the Photosystems (UK) Business Review and Stategic Plan, just agreed with Europe.

Review and strategy documents do not produce results. Results arise when strategies are translated into action plans and actions. At Southampton, this is exactly the issue that will be explored in depth: "How can we get results to flow?".

For five days, Photosystems (UK) managers will meet in a workshop context to explore the strategies and identify the critical managerial issues within them. By so doing, managers are invited to take ownership of the strategies and gain the fullest understanding of what the company asks of them in gaining the necessary results.

For many who have been involved with putting the strategies together for approval up to this point, their words will be familiar. The workshop, however, is not about creating strategy. It is about creating the wherewithal to see that it happens.

Some Outside Guidance

IMCB—the International Management Centre from Buckingham — has been invited to work with Photosystems (UK) senior managers to design and develop the Southampton workshop. The invitation to IMCB is about more than just the workshop's five days.

IMCB's brief is to build from the workshop a pattern of management development for all in the Photosystems (UK) team—over a two-year horizon. The Southampton workshop will be a forum from which the future design of management development support emerges. Such design has not been, indeed cannot be, prejudged. The only prior judgement is that since managerial behaviours need to change to meet and win in the face of market and technological change, some form of management development is needed.

As will be apparent from the workshop's design, and as will become increasingly obvious as subsequent involvement with IMCB matures, IMCB does not develop managers by running what we familiarly call "courses". IMCB was the world's first postgraduate business school to be established, wholly committed to what is termed the "action learning" approach to management development.

Simply stated, action learning for managers takes the challenges in their own organisation, and in the context of their own extant team. These are the focus for management development. The faculty of IMCB have to understand the managerial challenges of Photosystems (UK) and see how what they know to be good theory can be related to them. Such an approach is in contradiction to the conventional academic proposition of saying to the manager: "Here is the body of knowledge. You see if you can make it fit your own circumstances."

In the language of business, IMCB and action learning are customer or needs orientated rather than production or technology orientated. The idea, like all good ideas, is simple enough. Since IMCB does not have a commanding knowledge of Photosystems, making action learning effective for DuPont Photosystems (UK) is only possible by working with those who do have this knowledge on a joint venture basis for management development.

Workshop Dynamics

As the timetable shows, the working sessions run from Sunday mid-afternoon until Thursday lunch on 5 July. A tough work schedule has been designed with a considerable mix of styles and changes of pace. There is little talking at one another. It is, literally, a workshop.

After Peter Higginbotham's scene setting opener, the four major business areas are:

- Equipment Servicing;
- Non-destructive Testing (NDT);
- Distribution, and
- Printing and industrial.

These will each be expanded on during the week by their respective senior managers. Each will seek to trigger the implementation debate, posing topics for groups to discuss and report back for comment.

Three non-UK Photosystems directors will also be participating. Messrs Rauff, Bane and Madel will be joining the workshop on Monday for a series of presentations, followed at the end of the morning by a "panel question and answer" session with them. Mike Burgess, Director of Personnel (UK), will also be with the workshop the whole time, as a participant.

The important marketing research study completed in Spring 1984 by Metra amongst Photosystems' customers on their "needs and attitudes" will be the basis for substantial in-depth analysis led by Gordon Wills.

On Tuesday, IMCB's Team Management Resource will be deployed under Scott Inglis' leadership, aided by Mike Burgess.

Donald Cowell will be working as IMCB's third faculty member on Wednesday and Thursday, in support of the modules taking place then.

As has been observed, it will be a highly participative event. Yet time has been left in the late afternoon and light evenings for non-work activity—perhaps golf or tennis or a brisk stroll. Meal times are varied but lunches will be kept light and unintoxicating.

In all, the participants of the workshop, the opinions and conclusions and needs for future action must not be lost. Each and every participant will be dubbed a rapporteur for one or other of the sessions. This implies he will be "in charge" of writing the session up not later than 16 July. On 17 July, the senior management review meeting is to be held at Stevenage.

Joining Instructions Prior to Registration

Joining instructions will be issued to one and all by Pauline Darlow from Peter Higginbotham's office. Be sure to be there with time to spare for the start. We shall finish promptly as timetabled on Thursday.

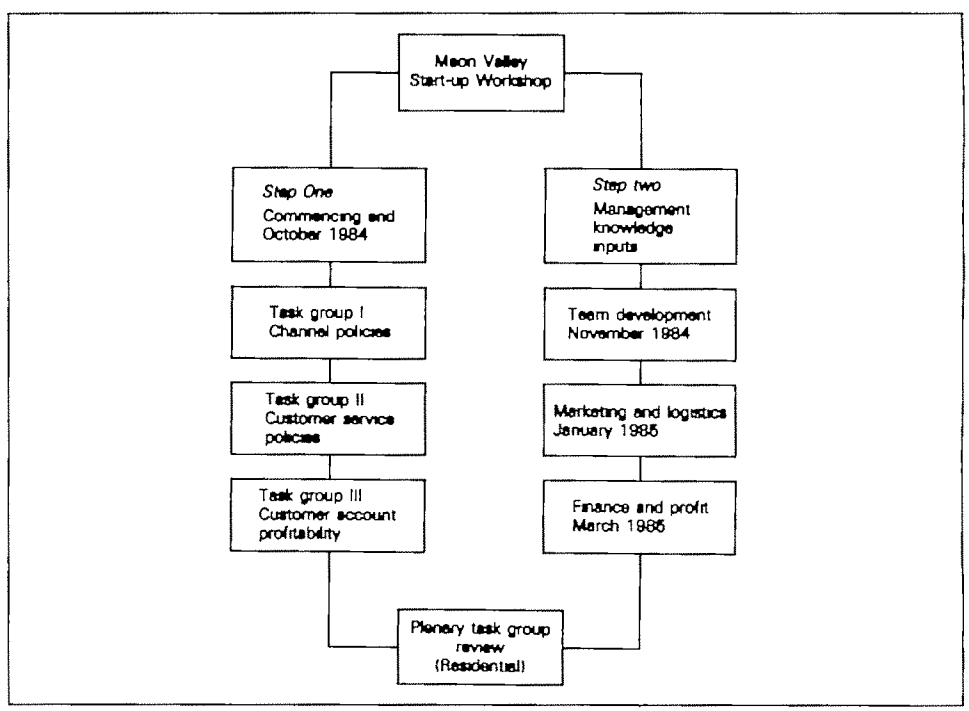


Figure 3.
Structure for Du Pont Photosystems Management Development Programme to 1986

Before joining, there are four things all participants are asked to do:

(1) Read and annotate the marketing research material enclosed herewith. Annotate means scribble in the margins and use hilite pens on it (but do the exercise at 3 below first).

(2) Come with your own ideas (do not discuss please) about the five major frustrations and the five major pleasures of your own job jotted down.

(3) Come with your own ideas (again do not discuss please) about the five major things that make your customers happy and the five major things that make them sad—about DuPont.

(4) Complete the Team Management Index which you will have received from Pauline Darlow and return by 15 June.

Everything else you need will be there and waiting for you in Southampton.

All completing at this stage may, if they so wish, submit for the IMCB postgraduate "Certificate in Management" by completing three case analyses and undergoing a viva on their task group's report. Credit and distinction standards may proceed to step three, as presented in Figure 4.

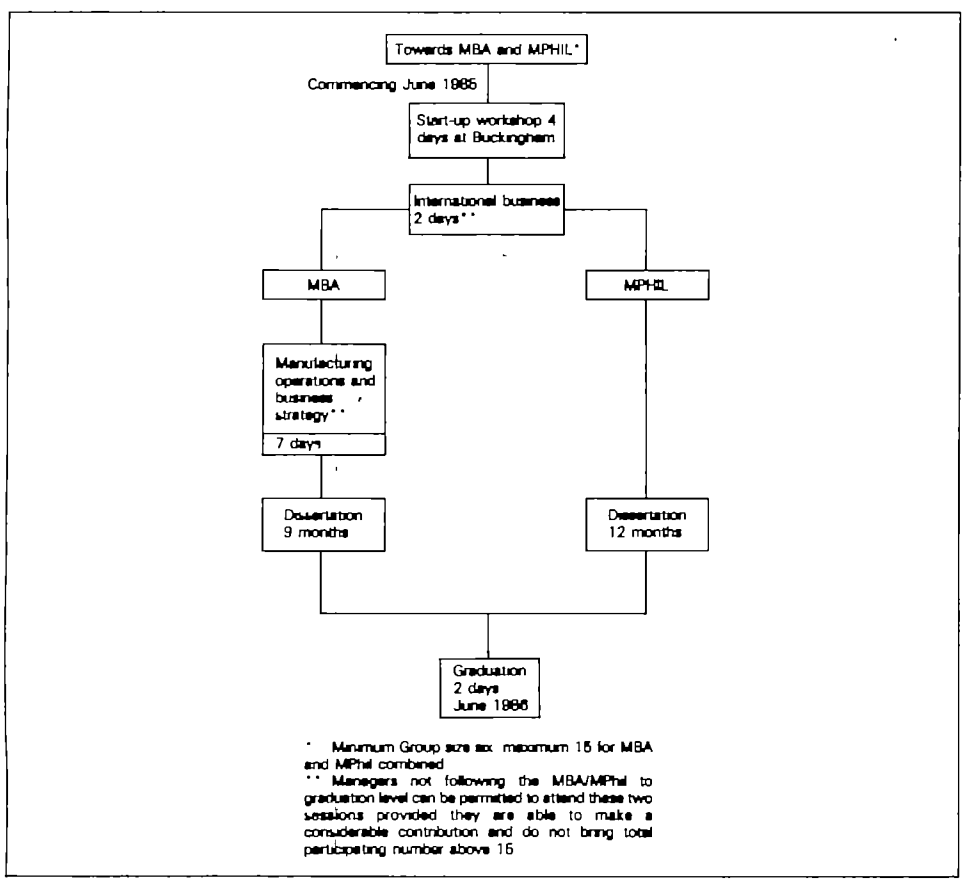

Towards MBA and MPHIL*
Commencing June 1986
Start-up workshop 4 days at Buckingham
International business 2 days**
MBA
MPHIL
Manufacturing operations and business strategy**
7 days
Dissertation 9 months
Dissertation 12 months
Graduation 2 days June 1986
* Minimum Group size six maximum 15 for MBA and MPhil combined
** Managers not following the MBA/MPhil to graduation level can be permitted to attend these two sessions provided they are able to make a considerable contribution and do not bring total participating number above 15

Figure 4.
Step Three (Aptitude tested)

Management Development Programme 1984/85

May 1985 has been agreed as the date by which each of the five operating companies within MY Dart plc Group will have their corporate strategy agreed and in place. Such a deadline enables the 1985/86 budgeting process to be that much more effectively accomplished.

The senior officers at Group have invited IMCB to join with company board members in developing their corporate strategies in the highest standards. Simultaneously the opportunity is being taken both to broaden the knowledge and skills of the top teams, and to develop the teams as such. This makes it a major programme of management development for one and all.

Benefits for the Senior Manager and for MY Dart

The professional manager can never know enough to do his job well. There is always room for improvement that enhances his own career prospects and advances the goals of the organisation.

The major problem for senior managers is to be "spared" from the urgent leadership roles they exercise within the firm, most particularly the medium sized enterprise.

MY Dart is determined that its senior managers shall be developed. The programme outlined below represents a major commitment by the Group to its top teams. It does, of course, also call for major commitment from its participants.

The key benefits that will be derived can be summarised as follows:

- a broader understanding for all of the process of general management;
- a more effective pattern of team work;
- greater financial awareness and understanding, and
- a better long-term and strategic perspective on the business.

The Development Approach

IMCB's approach is called action learning. This means that the objectives set out above which are of key significance to the MY Dart Group are taken as the wellspring for all the educational input.

Curriculum covered in formal sessions is derived from the needs of the MY Dart situation—not from any preconceived ideas of what is good for all senior managers.

Furthermore, when tuition is given on corporate planning, team management, product development, production and project management, sales, marketing or finance, cases and live examples are taken from MY Dart companies themselves as well as from other companies.

Work sessions are either plenary, i.e. with all senior management teams together at once, or in "sets" as we call them at IMCB. Sets will in fact be the company boards of:

(1) CR Packaging;
(2) Dawes Cycles;
(3) Haley and Weller;
(4) MY Sports and Games, and
(5) Trondex.

As well as IMCB faculty members offering tuition, support and assistance, group directors act as what we call "counterpart tutors". Paul Marks, Rob Campbell and Charles Bruce will all have their say about the subject matter covered and the way it is handled. They not only have an individual contribution to make as line supervisors in the drive towards May 1985, they will also be involved from time to time in the sessions in support of faculty from IMCB.

The Business Development Programme

The business development programme has been scheduled backwards from May 1985. The specific events and sessions have been designed to spread across the intervening months with the minimum of interference with the vital task of running the five businesses during 1984/85. Three major types of meeting take place.

The Start-up Session

At the very outset, a thorough orientation and briefing session, called the start-up, will be convened at Buckingham. It will be a plenary meeting and will run from a Thursday evening at 18.00 until the next Monday afternoon at 17.00. The key elements of the start-up are:

(1) A presentation by each company board under the title "In our company we ..."
(2) A review of managerial learning styles including action learning.
(3) A review of the information and intelligence strategies necessary for good planning.
(4) A review of the communication skills, written and verbal, necessary for effective management.
(5) A review of the process of corporate strategy formulation and its implications for operational planning, implementation and control.
(6) An overview of the weekend and regular study sessions to follow.
(7) A specific discussion of how the various "sets" will work on their project to prepare for May 1985.

Preparation for the start-up will include a measure of pre-programme work to be issued to all attending, not less than four weeks before commencement.

Residential Weekends

Four residential weekends will be held during the development programme.

The last one, early in May 1985, is the finale. At this, the group directors of MY Dart will receive the polished strategic plans of each of the five sets. Not only will the plans themselves be of the highest standard, so also will be their presentation. It will also be the occasion for a thorough review of the whole management development programme.

The third residential weekend will be specifically devoted to the issues of presentation and communication skills.

Residential weekend one will be devoted to further supportive assistance on corporate strategy and the design and management projects.

Whilst residential weekends one, three and four will be plenary, i.e. all sets together at once, much of the work will be undertaken on a set-by-set basis as the subject matter requires.

Residential weekend two is wholly independent, set by set. It involves a deliberate approach to team development on board IMCB's narrowboat, on the canals "somewhere" in England. Since it will be in the winter months, the assignment will be chilly. Tuition will be provided by way of assignments to be worked on from IMCB's resource, "How to Lead a Winning Team".

All residential weekends run from 18.00 on Friday to 16.00 on Sunday, except weekend two which operates from 18.00 Thursday to 14.00 Sunday.

Regular Thrice Monthly Meetings of Sets

Throughout the development programme, all sets will meet, normally with Trondex in Northampton, at least three times each month. These regular meetings will run on a mixture of 16.00-21.00 and 18.00-21.00. Occasional meetings will be held as individual sets at own-company offices. Normally, all sets will meet in plenary sessions for 60 per cent of the time at one location and then as separate sets for the balance of the time.

During these regular meetings, a curriculum of general management knowledge will be covered in a relevant and related way. Appropriate books, cases and references will be issued to all. The major topics will be:

- financial management;
- sales management and implementation;
- marketing management and control;
- human problems and organisation, and
- production and project management.

A special role of devil's advocate will be played by sets during selected sessions. They will be expected to cross-examine two other sets as their corporate strategy evolves—and to receive cross-examination from two others playing devil's advocate on them.

Finally, one project will be undertaken and discussed separately within each set. This, IMCB calls "inter-functional relationships". Each individual is required

to analyse what are the major points of friction in his own company from his particular desk with other functions in his organisation; and, of course, what can be done about them.

Since each participant approaches this project from a different idiosyncratic viewpoint at his own desk, important insights for more effective management abound.

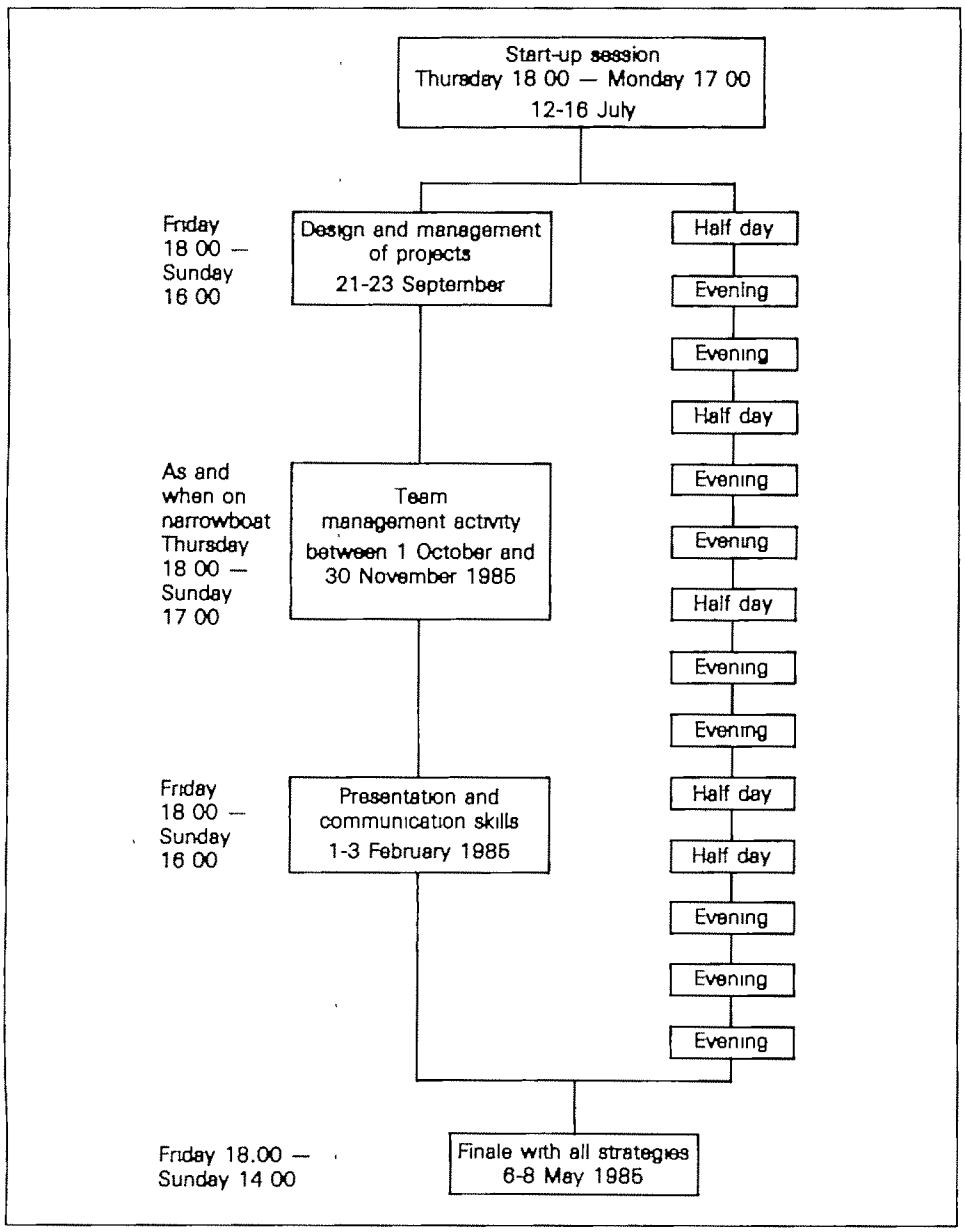


Figure 5.
Schedule of Meetings

Westpac European Marketing Development Programme

19 October 1984 - 6 January 1985

The growth and development of Westpac's European Division in recent years has been excellent but there is never room for complacency. Sustained success depends on continually improved professionalism both as bankers and as marketers of the services offered.

IMCB's International Centre for Banking and Financial Services has developed the Marketing Development Programme (MDP) to run from October 1984 - January 1985 after detailed consultations and discussions with participants and senior management in the European Division. IMCB faculty has also had the opportunity, from their base in Australia at the University of Queensland Business School, of working down under with Corporate, Investment, International and Retail Banking Divisions on the major programmes of marketing and sales development for all States immediately following the formation of Westpac.

The Philosophy of the MDP

The MDP is not just another course. It is different in that it takes what is known as an action learning approach to marketing development.

After an initial refresher workshop lasting five days (taken in two groups of up to 24 at a time) the programme addresses issues of strategic marketing importance on a project basis during the following two months.

Ten or more groups (or sets as action learning dubs them) work on separate projects, with six regular weekly three-hour meetings at Walbrook. These meetings build to a final weekend workshop when sets report to senior Westpac European management on what they have resolved should be done—and seek to win agreement to get on with it.

Not only are the projects Westpac Europe specific, so is the refresher workshop at the start. Study materials issued at the refresher workshop will deal with examples and problems taken from Westpac files. And the text book support materials build on Westpac Australia resources, re-interpreted for the European Division by IMCB and your own colleagues at Walbrook.

Such an action learning design has been adopted because nobody at IMCB (and nobody in Westpac Europe to whom we have spoken) believes effective marketing development happens without behaviour change and reinforcement of new attitudes by work-place commitment.

It is a tough programme. It has been designed to avoid distracting its participants from their day to day work. Only the refresher workshop is undertaken almost wholly during normal working hours.

Experience in Australia and elsewhere, as IMCB has worked with corporate and international bankers, has indicated that the investment is well worth the effort. It's worthwhile for Westpac and it's worthwhile for the career development of the managers concerned. Most bankers willingly concede that they either have not had enough, or can never get enough, marketing and sales development for their job. As the marketplace in Europe, and perhaps soon in Australia, becomes increasingly deregulated, the demands on marketing professionalism can only grow still further.

The Programme Structure

Both the refresher workshops begin on a Sunday evening and run through to the following Friday at 17.00 hours. Drinks and dinner will be available from 18.00 hours onwards on the Sunday evening at the White Hart Hotel, Buckingham. The evening session will start at 20.00 hours. Refresher workshops will be held at Hill House, Buckingham, IMCB's main venue for such work.

The split between all participants will be the same as that developed in June and September for the Manchester Business School programmes. All MBS participants will undergo the IMCB Marketing Development Programme although additional managers from other areas will also join in as well.

The agenda for the refresher workshop has to cover three main issues:

(1) What is Westpac Europe's corporate strategy and what role are the MDP participants being asked to play within it? This begins with a thorough presentation followed by detailed exploration by all participants of the marketing and sales implications.

(2) Direct study and development by way of refreshment of the concept and ideas of marketing and selling. Here case studies will be used as well as guided reading of articles and chapters from books on bank marketing.

(3) Clarification of the meaning and operational implications of the various projects to be done directly following the refresher workshop. The brief will obviously need to be debated extensively, and expanded upon. Most vitally, a work plan needs to be agreed by each set before the evening project sessions begin in earnest. This will be done at two evening sessions, Monday 12 November and Tuesday 13 November at Walbrook.

Upwards of ten sets will be working on projects running during November and December 1984, in preparation for the review weekend with senior management at the start of January 1985.

The sets will meet formally to review progress on their projects at Walbrook. Tuesdays will be earmarked for sessions from 16.30 - 19.30 for six consecutive weeks at which IMCB tutors will be in attendance to give support and advice as the sets work along under their own steam.

Apart from the final review weekend, there will be a special set-by-set mid-process session at Walbrook for which two objectives are present:

(1) To give ample opportunity to review the progress on the project.

(2) To identify, discuss and review the presentation skills that are going to be vitally necessary for the review weekend.

This emphasis on presentation skills is, obviously, functional to the review process. However, it also has the most considerable benefit in all future meetings with clients. Video equipment and qualified support is available during the mid-process session.

The review weekend will be convened at Middle Aston in Oxfordshire. It will start at 20.00 hours on the Friday. Dinner and drinks will be available at 18.00 hours as before. The session will finish at 16.00 hours on the Sunday.

Syllabus Content

The general syllabus structure of the refresher workshop will be as follows:

- What is the nature of marketing and how does it relate to corporate strategy and selling?
- How can we understand the needs of corporate treasurers and other customers and the influences on them to use our services or those of our competitors?
- How do we manage the four Ps of marketing in corporate and international banking, i.e. products, promotion, price and place?
- How can we collect and use marketing information and intelligence?
- How can we develop and execute the marketing and sales plans for market segments and "plan names"?
- What are the skills of a good salesman in extolling benefits from an understanding of needs, handling objections and closing the deal?
- How can we not only build new business but call and care for the extant client list?

Project Topics

The ten or so projects on which the sets will work immediately after the refresher workshop *must* be in topics concerning issues which corporate strategy in Westpac has identified as vital to the future of the European Division.

These are still emerging and will be finalised and agreed upon at General Manager and Chief Manager level within Westpac European Division.

Within European Division, however, each project will have a "client", as the jargon goes. The clients will be the Deputy Chief Managers together with the GM and CM as appropriate, depending on the topics selected.

Allocation of individuals to particular sets and projects will be done by the GM, CM and DCMs as appropriate.

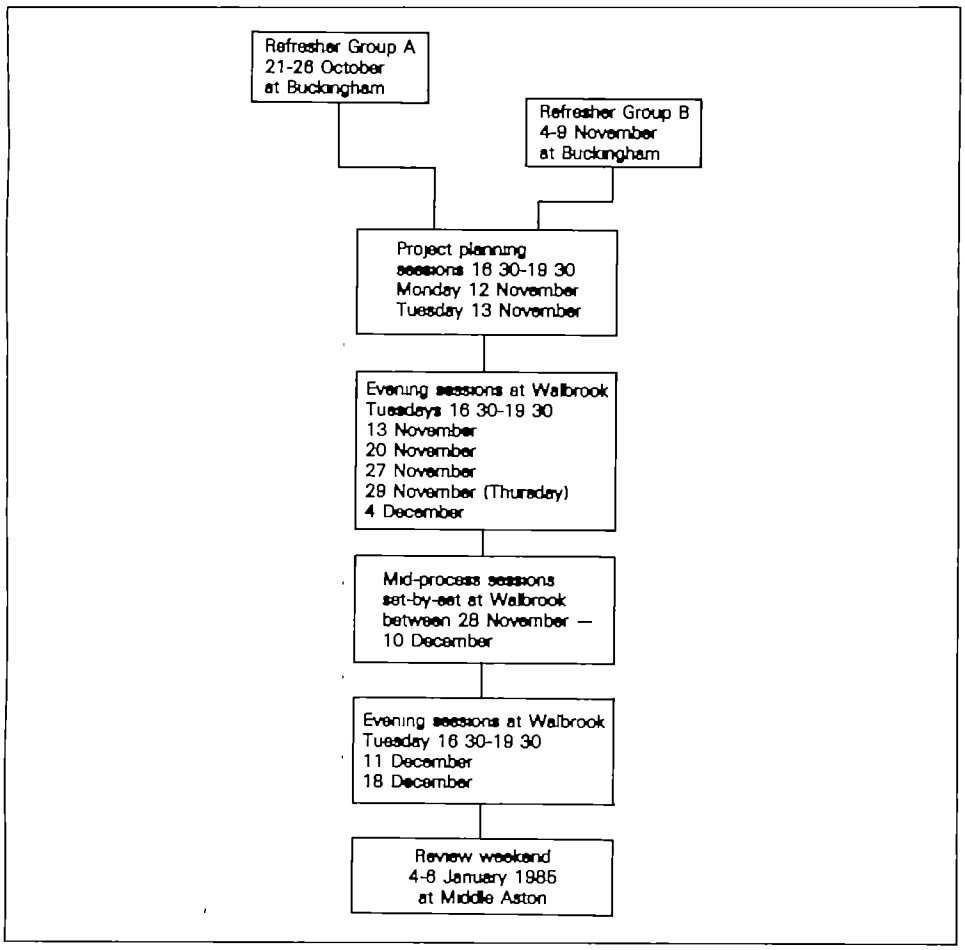


Figure 6.
Westpac European Division: Marketing Development Programme 1984-85

The Customer First — Faculty Last Approach to Excellence

by
Gordon Wills
International Management Centres, UK

The Workplace Challenge

Most of us learn best when we have pressure on us to perform[1]. For youngsters, this is normally accomplished by examinations, but for managers, something more appropriate is readily available — work-place challenges themselves. As such, it would seem to be natural that protagonists of management development should seek out those challenges to drive their mission forward. For a host of reasons we seldom do, however.

The dominant business school model is still faculty first, customer last. The faculty know best what a manager needs to know, the lexicon of management so to speak. Professional institutions worldwide have laboured long and hard and produced definitive statements of what the curriculum should contain — otherwise no accreditation.

The International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB) has founded its approach to management development on the evidence that teaching such a lexicon does not necessarily enable the recipient manager to manage more effectively. Indeed, it is not intended so to do. IMCB believes that, if necessary, the teaching of the full lexicon should be sacrificed to the more significant benefit of the application of a part of it. Reinforcement arises as knowledge and skills are deployed and if appropriate tutorial support is present throughout the process. Feedback learning is strongly present too.

Revans[2] pioneered this approach in the 1940s and 1950s in the UK, and in the 1960s in Belgium, under the title "action learning". More recently the process has been institutionalised into business school curricula to MBA and DBA levels in the United Kingdom, and in many Commonwealth countries.

Action in Industry

Action learning requires the identification by a meaningful team of managers of key issues for them. Just as quality circles begin from the reality of a work group, so does action learning management development. The customer must decide what the key issues are that can be actionably used for management development.

Dow Corning European Area in 1982 was in the process of reorganising its enterprise away from a product focus to an industry focus. We were asked to provide an action learning design and support system.

Its business management was primarily drawn from a chemical engineering background which was well suited to the product basis that reflected technologies. An industry basis called for a transformation of attitudes, indeed organisational

culture. Market orientation was indispensable. Product innovation must be directed towards key industrial needs rather than as an extrapolation of technological capabilities. Customer service levels must be derived from the realities of what each industry expected and required, not from what suited the technological criteria of manufacture. Distributors and channel member support services needed to be focused more on the ability to reach the right industrial customer than necessarily on technical competence. The management information system had to be re-presented, indeed the database revisualised, to provide the intelligence required to succeed in industries rather than in products.

These intellectual challenges were identified by the European Area Board of Dow Corning. But they did not attempt to solve them alone. They parcelled them out amongst 40 middle and senior managers to explore and propose and to act upon. The process of action learning lasted from 1982 to 1986. Fourteen action learning teams worked on the issues, budgeted for the action needed and made the changes necessary. IMCB's faculty tutored them in the skills of industrial marketing in Brussels, in Banbury and in the Ardennes. Each project team, called a "set" in action learning parlance, was developed as a team *per se* using the Margerison/McCann Team Management Resource[3].

DuPont Photosystems (UK) learnt of IMCB's approach with Dow Corning Europe from Bowater Containers, a neighbouring enterprise in Stevenage (UK) that IMCB had helped with action learning earlier on. At Bowaters the challenge had been to devolve planning from head office to manufacturing/marketing business units at four centres across the UK in 1982/1983.

DuPont Photosystems was beset with fierce Japanese competition in its market, largely from Fuji. Electronics were superseding photosystems approaches in both medical X-ray and printing industries. The strategic challenge that top management had at DuPont was to design, develop and implement end-market strategies with a team that had grown up in easier times. World technological leadership in a product area can make any marketing and sales team look good. When the edge has gone, technical and customer services, channel selection and management start to play a much greater role. Once again, as with Dow Corning, how could photo engineers learn the new attitudes, knowledge and skills? How could the finance department learn a whole new approach towards customer service from triggering orders and credit clearance to invoicing and collection?

Faculty from IMCB travelled to Hampshire and Hertfordshire to meet where it made most sense for those managers with whom DuPont Photosystems resolved to share the challenges, i.e. the managers who must address them to sustain their own and their division's success.

The knowledge input began naturally enough, therefore. Customer first — faculty last tutorials and workshops addressed customer services, channel management and customer account profitability. Plans were forged. The 1985 Sales Conference held in Guernsey, Channel Islands, unfurled the 1986 Sales Action Campaign for the outcomes of the Customer Account Profitability set. Within the business at Stevenage, the finance department metamorphosed itself into a series of customer service modules. Channel marketing services were enhanced.

But unlike Dow Corning, DuPont Photosystems did not stop here. From the 30 middle managers who worked in the initial sets, 15 continued to broaden their knowledge and skills in the management of their division. They studied finance further, and they built on their team development, learning further skills in human resource management. Indeed, this latter approach to teamwork so impressed the Group Personnel Director that he adopted the Margerison/McCann team development approach in the remainder of DuPont (UK).

Finally, 12 of the original 30 managers proceeded to complete their action learning work to MBA level, graduating in September 1986. Each such manager proceeded to focus on DuPont strategic development and eventually prepared a dissertation on a major issue from the company's two-five year planning horizon.

DuPont (UK)'s action learning processes encompassed each and every trigger element identified by Beckhard[4] except "changes in the values and role expectations of managers for development". There is little doubt, however, that, as of 1986 these values and expectations are very greatly changed. Management volunteers have rapidly emerged from other DuPont (UK) divisions for such a programme of development and DuPont itself has taken the lead in introducing action learning ideas to ICI and other enterprises in the Stevenage region.

Both these Dow Corning and DuPont examples show how voracious the appetite for management development is within an organisation when change must be made, and when the leaders charged with succeeding are ready to share those challenges with their colleagues. The resources that can be made available of time and money to make the future happen for the organisation are magnificent to behold in comparison with the response to worthy pleadings of an individual for personal career development.

For the academy to play an effective role in management development harnessed to the key strategic issues of the business, however, demands customer first, faculty last. There would be little point in offering Brussels-based managers an MBA programme in Buckingham, or Stevenage-based managers a formal marketing curriculum. The customers got what they needed to address the strategic challenges. Faculty made the big effort to resource the customer just the way the customer wanted.

Tackling the Banking Revolution

The same has been true of the action learning management development work of Allied Irish Banks (AIB) in Britain. In the Irish Republic, AIB holds a 50 per cent market share. In Britain, its markets had traditionally been limited to the Irish ethnic groups, with a very limited product range. Four divisions covered Retail Banking, Industrial Finance, Merchant and International Banking. In 1984, AIB Dublin resolved to invite the four divisions in Britain, which mirrored the four in Dublin, to seek ways to develop an integrated approach to financial services in Britain, that straddled the four product divisions. Banking in the UK was changing so rapidly that it was felt Britain could provide a good testbed for such changes for Dublin, and, in any event, it was inevitable in Britain anyway. The challenge passed to a new General Manager; Britain for AIB was similar to the situation

confronting Dow Corning. Transform the enterprise from a product focus to a market focus. Widely differing technical competence and expertise in corporate banking from aforfaiting to cash management or employee payroll services were to be brought together in a common focus in the medium-large corporate customer. International financial services and retail banking were to focus together on the higher net worth individual customer. Each division had two masters — the new General Manager: Britain and the Divisional Head back in Dublin. Each had separate geographical concentrations and its own branch/unit network. Each understood little of the skills or knowledge of the others.

Action learning for AIB Britain took the inevitability of the environmental changes going on in financial services and, secondly, the customer, as its main focal points. Then it established ten geographical area teams, with members from each division within them, encompassing all the branch/unit heads. They were first developed as a team using the Margerison/McCann resource, and then set to work on analysing the totality of financial services markets and the needs thereof in their geographical territories.

They were tutored as they needed it on the processes of developing good business and market-based plans. As their work developed, the Top Team of AIB Britain nominated mentors on a cross-divisional basis to the area teams. Finally the Top Team itself began to work as a set, preparing its top-down corporate strategy, Mark II. (Mark I had set the original broad parameters for each of the area teams to work within.)

Between 1984/1986 the action learning process weathered an industrial relations breakdown on a differential basis as between divisions and changes in Dublin's fortunes. The metamorphosed AIB Britain financial services organisation won the strongest possible endorsement from Dublin for its 1987/89 plans, including unparalleled further investment in management development. Once again, the enterprise has opted to invite branch/unit managers to proceed as DuPont had done to a broader-based pattern of management development, reading to diploma level in Financial Services Management and beyond that to MBA.

The curriculum, built from the realities of AIB Britain, embraces credit assessment skills, strategic management issues, personal counselling and negotiation skills, systems and technology management, advanced marketing and issue and relationship banking. The MBA dissertation requirement is that the topic must be taken from AIB's strategic plans for the next two-five years.

AIB Britain is not the only banking and financial services business which has adopted action learning by IMCB. The multinational giants NatWest and Midland International have both used it, as has Australia's Westpac. Westpac and NatWest deployed action learning to transform their approaches to retail banking in the face of continuing deregulation and the electronic banking revolution. In Europe, Westpac's European Division was mainly concerned to build its merchant and international banking strategies out of London.

From chemical and photographic engineering, banking and financial services, we can lead readily into the leisure industry sector and the liquor industries. Here, the UK enterprise, Grand Metropolitan, through its IDV (UK) subsidiary, made a major investment to develop 20 of its middle and rising managers to lead on key

strategic issues for the business. The incoming Chief Executive wished to transform the relaxed and highly traditional way of doing business in the off-license trade for liquor at a time when the EEC was insisting on more open competition and deregulation. The organisation had only two mid-level managers with management development to MBA level in a staff of 8,000. He invited IMCB to develop and run two sets within three years. The main board directors were called in by IMCB to act as counterpart tutors and dissertation mentors and corporate strategy sessions were based on the dissection of the IDV annual planning cycle as it happened. The Chief Executive, himself already an MBA, went on to complete his doctorate at the same time.

His example was spotted in the industry by Seagram UK and Europe who immediately initiated a similar programme. Overseas, IDV companies observed progress and the Chief Executive in Singapore is undertaking doctoral work on corporate strategy for his enterprise in South East Asia.

As luck would have it, both IMCB's sponsors at IDV and Seagram joined the rapidly expanding Guinness enterprise after its takeover of Bells Whisky and Distillers Company (DCL) in 1985/86. Not surprisingly, they moved together and swiftly to explore action learning approaches to enable the newly acquired enterprise to get up to speed with, and to share the culture of, the parent organisation.

Learning from Experience

When action learning does not work, it is just as illuminating as when it does. It will be apparent that inviting middle managers to participate in the intellectual equity of the enterprise raises expectations no end. From time to time, some of the participating managers are deemed not to be capable of carrying through their ideas or the actions they have proposed. Sometimes, the issues to be grappled with, the challenges, are misconceived or frankly change during the programme of learning.

Nowhere has this been more spectacular than with the largest of IMCB's customers, British Railways, and the smallest, MY Dart.

British Railways had, yet again, reorganised its enterprise away from a geographical pattern of regions to sectoral businesses. There were five in InterCity Passengers, Provincial Passengers, Parcels, Freight and London/South East, this latter being mainly commuter passengers. A sixth was of growing importance, International, with the endorsement in 1986 of the construction of a Channel Tunnel for rail only traffic to and from France.

Railways have the longest of possible traditions, and indeed requirements, for a clear command structure for operational effectiveness. But the specification of customer requirements was given to the new sectoral businesses. These businesses were in competition with buses for passengers, with private cars on excellent motorways, heavy lorries and trucks and airlines. The operational issues had to be resolved in the context of what the market wanted, rather than what it was convenient to offer technically. Parcels took the lead very early on with franchised pick-up and delivery services to match fierce competition from renaissant road parcels business led by Australia's TNT in the UK. InterCity followed and Provincial with major investment programmes in new, lower-cost rolling stock.

Catering services, station retailing, car parking were all transformed in a drive to create a 20th century railway less and less dependent on government grants for social purposes.

The challenge for middle-level managers was to play their part in this strategic revolution. They needed to evolve intrapreneurial skills that had long since lain dormant. A redeployment personnel policy as the manpower levels fell had also entailed putting many round pegs in square holes.

The action learning design created at joint managing director level involved encouraging an understanding of marketing processes at the new middle management levels within the sectors where commercial responsibilities lay.

However, two major factors stopped the process of action learning in its tracks. The first was key changes at sector director level. Three out of the five of those who sponsored the initial formulation of goals in the sectors moved on and the incoming directors were never sold on what they inherited. They rapidly saw it as a distraction from their "own" goals, not in direction, but in terms of the customer-developed issues on which the middle managers were focusing. In a highly pressurised environment, the new directors wanted their own views of what was vital acted on, and there was little or no time for sharing. The Joint Managing Director resolved to abort the action learning process 18 months after it began.

Similar hazards were encountered with MY Dart, a small UK-based conglomerate in sport and leisure goods, packaging and pyrotechnics. MY Dart was a recovery situation with tough central management. It was keen to delegate responsibility downwards, but obviously nervous so to do until the recovery was complete. The programme made its way to completion, but without inspiring the sponsoring Chief Executive. Within two years, several of the key individuals had left the enterprise. The recovery nevertheless continued well.

Conclusion

It can readily be concluded from the selection of examples cited above that action learning on a company-wide basis requires the continuing and determined commitment of the topmost line managers if it is to succeed. When top management cannot give such a commitment, either because it cannot see far enough or is itself insufficiently confident and stable in office, it is better not to begin.

Action learning worked excellently for IMCB on the upswing of enterprise development. There was plenty of confidence and plenty to focus on for future achievements over two to five years. As a solution to crisis it offered little for a sustained pattern of management development.

However, I must not close by blaming the customer first-faculty last action learning model for IMCB's failures to perform as well for British Rail or MY Dart as we did for Dow Corning, DuPont, AIB or Grand Metropolitan. I prefer rather to blame myself and the other faculty members involved. We were (often still are) so ingrained in our wish to get on with the faculty-last contribution that we all too often rush the customer-first element. Like all too many providers of services, we are apt to forget the customers' requirements once we have "made the sale". I do believe we made this mistake with both the failures described above.

Customer first, faculty last must be much, much more than skin deep. The entire pattern of faculty attitudes has to be transformed[5].

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The "New MBA"—What It Means for Managers

by
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Editor, Management Decision

The business pages of Britain's quality newspapers have recently become enthusiastic again about the Master of Business Administration (MBA) qualification in particular, and management education and training in general. Two reports, by Charles Handy and John Constable, have bemoaned the British propensity for "pick it up as you go, old boy" training rather than the formal development investments of our major industrial competitors, such as France, Germany, Japan and the United States, and the so-called "New MBA" is once more with us. Rather like the idea of the "new man", it seems to have been around for some time without any major impact, and without anyone knowing what it all means in practice.

The MBA has been offered by British university business schools since the mid-60s but, it is fair to say, it has not been "accepted" by the business establishment until the 80s. No national syllabus as such exists, but, by custom and practice, MBA students study for one or two years full-time, or three to five years part-time, a syllabus comprising marketing, finance and personnel management, operations and production management, economics, statistics, computers and business strategy, plus a range of ancillary options or study courses such as business ethics, management psychology, distribution management, etc. Students use case studies which outline, for teaching purposes, how someone else did something, for conclusions to be drawn on what they did right, wrong, and what they should do next. The case-study method of teaching has been developed in its most concentrated form by the famous Harvard Business School in Boston, USA.

Dissidents

As could be expected in the educational world, many academic "dissidents" surfaced (and submerged again) during the first 30 or so years of the MBA. The case-study method built, it was argued, an "over-theoretical" approach to the messy problems of the real business world, and created a "transfer" problem, by which graduates frequently had difficulties in transferring learned classroom techniques into situations where the variables were different (if, essentially, the problem was similar). The more esoteric disciplines, such as outer reaches of macro and micro-economic theory, were all very interesting but pandered more to the needs of the teachers than the needs of the customers (i.e. students and their future employers).

The very delivery system itself offered by universities was not ideally geared to its target audience. A one or two year full-time programme would usually be out of the question for an early or mid-career manager, unless he/she was willing

to resign, take a redundancy option and sell finance (and hope that a job in his/her old company would still be open if nothing more interesting materialised). Therefore, an increasing number of MBA full-timers were immediate postgraduates, with no experience at all to bring to the party — not the original intention. The part-time MBA suffers the curse of all relatively elongated part-time academic programmes — the failure to complete is high. This is due to a variety of reasons. Three to five years is a long time in one place for many younger junior/middle managers on a career path, and new organisations are often unwilling to pick up the sponsorship tab that the old one incurred. Geographical moves intervene, and, quite simply, enthusiasm may wane when faced with producing 20,000 words for a Master's dissertation unless strong pressures from the institution or the sponsoring employer intervene.

A Mark Two MBA

In 1982 the first of what could truly be described as a "Mark Two" MBA was launched by a group of the aforementioned academic dissidents, who formed an independent business school called the International Management Centre from Buckingham — IMCB. Led by Dr Gordon Wills, formerly of Cranfield and Bradford Management Centres, who already had the reputation as the UK's top marketing professor, in partnership with other well-known university figures such as Charles Margerison of Cranfield and Keith Howard of Bradford, IMCB set out to address directly some of the difficulties outlined above.

IMCB's brand of new MBA was actually a mixture of old, new and borrowed. Out went the peripheral subjects such as economics, statistics and computing, in favour of a concentration on a "core" of management disciplines of marketing, finance, operations, human resource management and strategy, backed up by "skills" areas such as team leadership and communications. Corporate sponsorship was compulsory, and the duration of the part-time ("in-post") programme was distilled to a concentrated 18 months only. All major study projects were based around own organisational issues — focus which has led to the accusations of "too narrow" — save a survey of published literature, which forces the student into the current body of knowledge as a theoretical underpinning to his/her essentially practical project.

All in all it seems to have worked. Helped by some industry sympathisers (most notably James Espey, then of International Distillers and Vintners and now Deputy Managing Director, United Distillers, who first bought IMCB's MBA in a major organisation), the concept took off steadily, if not spectacularly. It now boasts 150 graduates and a similar number of current students on its MBA programmes worldwide, including a programme running in-company with "big eight" accountancy practice Arthur Young.

Black Sheep

Interestingly, the university establishment, who looked disparagingly at Wills and his academic black sheep back in 1983, have begun to flatter by imitation. The

educational philosophy of "action learning" which was resuscitated — some say in bastardised format — by IMCB, now forms a part of most business school and management development managers' portfolios. Recently, and most significantly, comes the second wave of "New MBA", typified by the City University Business School (CUBS) Consortium MBA.

The CUBS MBA, like IMCB's before it, boasts "increasing managerial competence through successful completion of a portfolio of company-based learning activities", assessments "on the basis of performance on in-company learning assignments and not through written examinations" and a promise of "tailor-made programmes to meet the needs of individual managers and their companies". The CUBS MBA shifts the centre of attention from the business school as senior partner in the university/student/sponsor relationship, towards a more equal tripartite balance.

Governing Board

The Consortium is a fascinating next step down the road to the new MBA, in that its members actually form a governing board for the programme, along with CUBS faculty and management. To join, a company pays a £30,000 joining fee and around £15,000 a year membership, plus an estimated £6,320 per student over two years. Non-members are also eligible to join the Consortium MBA, but at an annual enrolment fee of £4,155 plus expenses as incurred, giving a two-year cost of approximately £11,800.

The CUBS programme is, therefore, not a cheap option — indeed it makes IMCB's offering at an expensive-sounding flat fee of £6,950 per student for 18 months appear generous value. As a marketing technique, it is a brilliant conception, as it effectively "hooks" members into sending a large number of students through the programme to make membership worthwhile, given a £30,000 investment plus £15,000 per annum sunk cost before any activity at all! The more students that members send, the more the unit costs drop, and the more CUBS directors rub their hands gleefully over the unusual situation of a British state university generating a cash surplus.

Both MBAs stress implementation of findings beyond simply analysis; IMCB's rather more forcefully (in fact, a percentage of the degree credits is awarded for implementation, or at least implementability). IMCB actually builds in a unique feature of "renewability" of their qualification; every five years, graduates have to report formally on their managerial achievements since graduation (including the implementation of recommendations made from their projects). Failing a satisfactory report and evaluation, IMCB's constitution pledges that their graduates will actually not have membership of IMCB renewed, and will forfeit the right to claim a current MBA. It is a policy which some of the more rigorous professional bodies use, but some interesting reactions are due when the first graduates are "struck-off", if this indeed happens. The aim is to keep the qualification current, and indeed IMCB's tutorial faculty also must undergo the same evaluation process.

CUBS, like IMCB, bases its curriculum around five core areas (not quite the same five). Its syllabus is rather more dynamic, in that an assessment of what the student already "knows" is followed by a "learning contract" (between student,

client and business school) which covers the objectives to be achieved and the subjects to be concentrated on. The fluidity of the CUBS programme mirrors that offered by other progressive management and educational institutions, such as the Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia, which takes a similar "requirements not syllabus" approach, or the American Management Association on their Master of Management Degree.

Both programmes are externally examined; both use industrialists as well as academics as tutors and examiners.

The New MBA — Next Steps and Conclusions

There is little doubt that, intellectually at least, both academics and industrialists believe in the new MBA, and that industry appears to be willing to invest in programmes such as IMCB's MBA and the CUBS Consortium. More traditional programmes, offered by the likes of Cranfield, London, Strathclyde, Aston, Manchester and Bradford, do still take the lion's share of management students. But the activities of independents such as IMCB, Henley and Ashridge have caused the university establishment to revise its thinking — leading to, they would argue, establishment initiatives like the CUBS consortium, which would not have occurred without their example and innovation.

The major proponents of the new MBA illustrate an interesting role reversal. IMCB, once seen as a group of academic mavericks, is now an established institution with a proven track record, whereas City, admittedly armed with the kudos and tradition which university accreditation brings, has only promises to offer. "We wish them well", says IMCB Principal, Gordon Wills. "The market is plenty big enough for more of us, and I personally am delighted that our academic colleagues are following us down this road. It does reassure me that we at IMCB are not prophets crying in the wilderness."

Right Choice

The answer to what is the right choice for students and employers depends, naturally, on what client and student needs are. For the new graduate and for the career starter or changer, the traditional full-time MBA remains unparalleled in its depth and breadth, as well as being a relatively low direct cost option, despite the shortage of grant aid from local education authorities.

Whilst CUBS have targeted, and will certainly score a high success rate amongst City of London financial institutions, IMCB will continue to score points because of its willingness to organise "wherever our customers want us", rather than at its modest Buckingham campus. This means that, for example, its imminent Crown Paints' in-company MBA Programme will operate in and around Crown's Lancashire headquarters, and IMCB's tutors will travel to them. Similarly, IMCB's open MBA programmes meet wherever the students decide for their weekend or evening sessions — and IMCB organises tutorial support for them.

Good News

The conclusion on the new MBA for industry and industrialists, is overall that it is good news. For London-based operations, the Consortium should certainly

	IMCB	CUBS
Programme	MBA	Consortium MBA
Price	£6,950 per student (books, etc, included)	*Membership* £30,000 joining fee £15,000 p.a. membership fee £ 6,300 per student *Associate membership* £11,800 per student
Duration	18 months part-time	2 years (maximum 3 years) part-time
Externally assessed	Yes	Yes
Evaluation and composition of degree credits	45% Masters Project (in-company) 30% Two major projects 25% Case-study analysis	2-3 in-company assignments A "demonstration of managerial competence" throughout the programme and for six months following completion of all input courses
Start-up dates	On demand, but basically September, February and June yearly	September and February (1987 and 1988 schedules)
Admission	Corporate sponsorship minimum four years' middle/senior management experience IMCB admission test First degree not a prerequisite	Normally first degree or recognised professional qualification (Exceptionally, open entry) Corporate sponsorship GMAT test (although result does not necessarily determine admission)
Syllabus	*Core courses* Marketing Operations Finance Human resources Strategy and policy *Other courses* International business Team management Communications Data gathering and analysis Management of a research project Implementation and action for change *Start-up period* including Time management Action learning Learning to learn Information services and sources Contemporary issues	*Core courses* Organisational behaviour Business policy Marketing Accounting and finance Employee relations and personnel *Options* include. Information management Production management *Other activities* Primarily team-building

Table I.
The Two New MBAs

be looked at, and organisations joining would be following a distinguished group of founder members. For organisations looking for a more modest commitment, or for the company-based MBA programme which IMCB have made its speciality, it may be the one to talk to.

Time will tell if the new MBA will be a passing fancy, or will actually metamorphose the British management educational establishment. One suspects — and this may be hopeful — the latter. In any case, interesting days lie ahead in the once unruffled groves of academia, where the wind of change appears to be blowing forcefully.

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Wealth Creation through Management Development

by
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Most CEOs leave people development to the personnel guys. How do I know? Because that is where I usually get sent when I mention management development, and it is where all the surveys say it gets done.

This state of affairs has created a gigantic waste of resources and occasioned countless missed opportunities for wealth creation. By wealth creation, I mean bottom-line profit improvement for the stockholders and personal career development for the managers involved.

The only way I can see to get those wealth opportunities exploited is by insisting on talking to CEOs, despite their (and their secretaries') accomplished fencing styles.

Quite rightly, CEOs do not spend their time on the detailed operations of their enterprise, but they do spend it on formulating appropriate strategies and insisting that they are professionally carried through. I ask no more than that for management development. The sequence of CEO involvement goes like this (and I have 500 cases under my belt now to prove it):

(1) Identify the key strategic challenges over the next two to five years that, if you manage them right, will ensure success.

(2) Identify the individuals in the enterprise who are expected to be tomorrow's key senior managers.

(3) Bring them together in teams that are properly tutored and mentored as they work on the key strategic challenges — mentored by existing top management and tutored in a style that is defined by the challenges — not by any preconceived notions of what should be "good" for them.

(4) Follow through with all the necessary support on those team outcomes, with the managers who said it ought to be done actually doing it as far as possible i.e. living with the consequences of their ideas.

Only one warning: be deaf to those who say they (or their colleagues) are too busy, or that it should be delayed until...well until... Be deaf, because all managers who have to work on the present success of their enterprise are too busy unless the alternative, even more important business for the future, is insisted on. There is little or no point in working with people who are not busy, because they seldom have it in mind to go anywhere anyhow. Planning the future is what could have made the current present more prosperous still.

Such an approach to management development meets the CEO's absolute requirement to improve the bottom line, to create wealth for shareholders

and to develop the top team of senior managers that can make the future happen in the enterprise.

No managers leave the enterprise whilst being developed in this way, either emotionally, physically or intellectually. All their energies are released and focused on to the future success of the enterprise. They do this by undertaking and acting on key strategic challenges that have all the ingredients for making a directly discernable financial return for the investment costs involved. Typically, the returns are 1,000 per cent over the first three years on investments that have ranged from $150,000 to $2 million.

If people are the greatest asset of an enterprise, those assets need a continuous investment programme, not only to stem depreciation and redundancy, but to create leverage into the future.

Some management development providers are coming out of their shells at last. Going (but not gone) are the days when more management education should be achieved because the Japanese, Germans or South Koreans do more than we...whoever we might be. Gone (or going) are the days when management education is offered as a "good thing" and the State (or somebody else) should provide more of it. Going (I hope) are notions that we should all pledge ourselves in the Third Runnymede Declaration that will make all our chaps do four, six or ten days course work each year forever.

Management development, appropriately positioned, is one major way any CEO can improve the bottom line. Tell that to academics and the personnel departments. Demand that their detailed capital investment programme in the enterprise's human assets is on the desk within three months.

The approach I have outlined here shows that management education should not be done for its own sake. It should be done because it is an excellent investment for any enterprise to make. And an enterprise should only invest when it can see an excellent opportunity for a good return, or a good opportunity for an excellent return. By focusing on the key strategic challenges from the CEO's perspective, we built in the clincher. Management development becomes synonymous with bottom-line wealth creation, and investment goes sky high.

Part Two: Confirming Cases

Management by Degrees: A Case Study in Management Development

by
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Introduction

Management in Britain is slowly becoming less of an amateur business and more of a profession. Gone are the days when the right accent and public school background were an automatic entrée into a management post. Senior executives are starting to realise that it is not enough for their managers to learn simply by doing the job, but that they need to be trained in all aspects of their business. To produce bright, challenging, lateral-thinking managers who can succeed in the contracting markets of the late 1980s, management development is essential.

The wine and spirit industry has perhaps been particularly prone to the amateur management syndrome – a liking for wine or a general interest in brewing, coupled with the right school tie and a few influential contacts, has produced much blinkered and inadequate leadership in the industry.

International Distillers & Vintners Limited (IDV) owns or controls over 20 wine and spirit marketing companies around the world. Its British-based operation, IDV (UK), is "in the business of marketing a range of profitable, well-packaged, well-advertised, premium-priced liquor brands, be they agencies or own brands" (Mission Statement, 1983). Among its leading brands are Smirnoff Vodka, Bailey's Irish Cream, Piat d'Or, Malibu, Croft Original Sherry, and many other household names. Indeed IDV (UK) is currently the premier wine and spirit company in the UK.

In the early 1980s, IDV (UK) already had a sound management development policy in the shape of a graduate recruiting and training scheme whereby trainee managers spent time working in different divisions within the company, which gave them a breadth of vision and understanding of the complexities and day-to-day issues in the different areas. When James Espey was appointed Managing Director and Chief Executive in 1982, he was eager to build a more advanced management development programme on the existing foundations.

Before investing any money in such a programme, the Chief Executive first considered the possibility of modifying the existing recruitment policy by employing graduates who already had an appropriate business qualification, such as an MBA (Master of Business Administration). There were several major drawbacks to this idea:

(1) Most MBA courses are geared much more to staff skills than genuine line manager skills; so the course contents were not ideal for IDV (UK)'s needs.
(2) MBA graduates tend to have done the course immediately after their first degree course. IDV (UK) considered that work experience was essential before the theoretical world of case studies and simulation exercises could have a real effect on an individual's development. The student needs to have learnt some of the real live issues of business and the complex factors that make for good business decisions.
(3) People who have studied for their MBAs after gaining several years of work experience are not easy to find. Many who would benefit from doing such a course have, by this time, financial and domestic responsibilities. They simply cannot afford to take 18 months or so off work to study. This is particularly true in the UK where managerial incomes are low by world standards.
(4) Those people who do take time off to do an MBA at a later stage should be treated with caution: they may be making a last desperate attempt to boost a flagging career.

It looked as though a new programme had to be devised for the development of managers within IDV (UK).

The Commitment of Top Management

One of the key requirements of a good management development programme is that it must be a top management responsibility. It is far too important a task to be left solely to the Personnel Department, whose role ought rather to be ensuring the correct implementation of the chosen training schemes. Decisions about the nature and extent of the programme must rest with senior management. The Chief Executive should be personally motivated by the management development programme, and the entire executive Board must share responsibility for the scheme, instead of allocating it to the Personnel Department and forgetting about it.

Thus the first task for James Espey in 1982 was to persuade both the Group Board of IDV Limited and the Board of IDV (UK) that an active management development policy would be highly beneficial to the company in both the short and the long term.

One of the problems about convincing any Board of the value of management development programmes is that the costs are all too obvious (substantial course fees, not to mention the cost of managers' time and the disruption of their departments), whereas the benefits are less easily quantifiable. But there are positive ways of presenting the advantages of a good management development policy. Consider the cost of replacing a dissatisfied manager who leaves the company in search of a more demanding and stimulating job. The cost is significant, both in terms of money and of dislocation in the company. A good management development scheme should be considered not as a drain on resources, but as an immense benefit in terms of lower staff turnover, better morale and better-directed people.

A number of the IDV (UK) Board were sceptical at first, but went along with the programme as a whim of the Chief Executive's that was to be humoured. But when the Board saw the tremendous changes in the individuals involved as they acquired a new breadth of understanding, the programme came to have its unanimous and unequivocal support.

Choosing a Course

Having gained Board approval, the next step was to decide on an appropriate course. The aim was to develop in managers the abilities to analyse company problems over a wide range of areas, to tackle problems on the basis of limited information and to gain a new initiative and breadth of vision–in short, to train them to become better executives so that they could make a more effective and profitable contribution to the organisation. The obvious choice, therefore, was an MBA degree course. However, there were major drawbacks to sending managers away to study for up to 18 months:

(1) Jobs could not easily be held open for that long: other people would have to be found to fill the gap, leaving the absentee manager without a job.

(2) The likelihood of managers wanting to return to their previous jobs, or even organisations, after a prolonged absence was felt to be slim. The course was bound to change their attitudes and perspectives enormously. The company would therefore effectively be training managers for someone else.

Only one course seemed to offer what IDV (UK) was seeking: the MBA programme devised and run by the International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB). A number of factors were involved in the final choice:

(1) The course was structured on a part-time basis, so no long-term leave of absence was necessary.

(2) IMCB alone offered material that could be tailored to the specific needs of IDV (UK). No other organisation at that time was willing to come into the company to produce an MBA programme together. The course was in fact a joint venture by IDV (UK) and IMCB, and was custom-built to the company's needs.

(3) The Chief Executive of IDV (UK) was attracted by the IMCB philosophy of bringing education into the business, in the realisation that conventional education was not delivering what the consumer required.

Choosing the Students

Clearly, the students had to be chosen carefully. About 60 managers applied to go on the course. IMCB vetted the applicants in terms of conventional MBA criteria. The company then considered other factors, such as personality, practicality (i.e. the impossibility of releasing two key people from the same area) and so on. Finally, 13 managers were selected to take the action learning programme — and all 13 eventually completed it.

The Board considered carefully whether to put any obligations on the students in terms of commitment to the company, but eventually decided to make it a moral

rather than a contractual commitment. It was hoped that the development and enrichment of these managers would increase their loyalty to IDV (UK) as the sponsor of the programme. And in the main, this is indeed how it worked out.

The MBA Programme in Action

The programme lasted 18 months on an official part-time basis. In reality it was full-time, as it was a living programme–the relationship between the students' work and their studies was so close that each affected and altered the nature and perspective of the other.

The programme was championed by James Espey as Chief Executive, and many of the IDV (UK) Board were involved with it. One director had special responsibility for co-ordinating the programme, along with one or two personnel officers. Senior executives were encouraged to participate in the programme by giving lectures, which compelled them to think afresh and in a hard and analytical way about their own areas.

In addition, a number of counterparts were appointed, i.e. people within the organisation who had particular knowledge of a subject were "twinned" with lecturers from IMCB. In this way, the programme was an excellent balance of theory and practice–the students were never given the chance to retreat to the ivory towers of academe.

The students met for formal teaching once a week, for about four hours every Monday evening. A member of IMCB staff gave a lecture or established the basis for a discussion group. In addition, there were a number of formalised away-weekends, directed and organised by IMCB.

Each student also had to produce a dissertation. The subjects were chosen by the students themselves, in consultation with the IMCB Faculty and their counterparts on the IDV (UK) Board. The company set two criteria for the choice of subject:

(1) that it should satisfy their academic needs in making a significant contribution to their MBA studies, and

(2) that it should make a significant contribution to the company.

The subjects were all scrutinised by Espey to ensure that they would make a beneficial contribution, and changes were made as a result.

Each student had an appropriate "sponsor" at IDV (UK) Board level. A client/customer relationship was developed between student and sponsor, involving terms of reference, priorities and strategy discussions. The object of the dissertations was to produce *actionable* recommendations.

Benefits to IDV (UK)

Many benefits accrued to IDV (UK) as a result of its participation in the MBA scheme.

(1) IDV (UK) effectively had 13 free consultants. All their project work was about the organisation. The dissertations in particular were in-depth studies on different aspects of company policy; they covered communications

strategy, the future of wine brands in the UK, own-label strategy, site selection in retail trading, wholesaling strategy, and so on–in fact, all the subjects that were of major strategic concern to the company. And as the aim was to produce actionable recommendations, IDV (UK) received some valuable ideas.

(2) The effect of the MBA scheme on staff was wide ranging within IDV (UK). The students themselves broadened and increased their repertoire of alternative solutions which could be applied to general management problems, and enhanced their ability to think laterally. This is particularly important for a company like IDV (UK) which has a history of a stable management team, and therefore a relatively small input of external ideas.

Although only 13 followed the programme they had a catalytic effect on others in the company:

- On their peers, who saw the students' vision widening, leading them to become more challenging of top management. The students had ceased to see themselves in a straitjacket labelled "Sales" or "Marketing", "Finance" or "Production", and had started to challenge both laterally and upwards. This rubbed off on their colleagues.
- On top management, because they needed to be more alert and think through policy decisions more carefully in the presence of searching challenges from the MBA set. In 1985, IDV (UK) had a valuable sales think-tank on strategic issues which would not have occurred without the stimulus of the MBA programme.

In general, morale was strengthened and confidence in the company increased as a result of the improved management relations, both upwards and laterally.

(3) In gaining a more complete vision of the company as a whole, some of the students recognised for the first time where their real skills and interests might lie. For example, one very promising sales executive asked to be transferred to Distribution, where he is now running one of the biggest wine and spirits depots in the country. Thanks to the MBA programme, he was able to see an exciting career opportunity that would never otherwise have crossed his mind–and to act on it.

(4) The MBAs were used as checks on the company's business plan. They had complete copies of the draft business plan (often a document restricted to a handful of top executives) and challenged the Board on every item they had doubts about. It is all too easy for secrecy to be used as a weapon by an insecure or inadequate management to avert any challenge from subordinates. One or two members of the Board did indeed have qualms about the open style of management that allowed students access to almost all the company's files, but they soon saw the palpable benefits of having more contributions to policy making. The only business that needed to be kept secret was possible takeovers or acquisitions–though this did not stop theoretical discussions on which company or brand should be acquired *if it were possible.*

(5) A by-product of the MBA programme was the favourable feelings towards the company engendered in the participants. Not only were they better educated as a result of their studies, but were also better disposed towards IDV (UK). Their own motivation was increased and this enhanced their contribution to the company as well as giving them more satisfying and stimulating jobs.

(6) The substantial long-term benefits lay in the improved quality of management decisions which these managers would have been unable to make without the advantage of an action learning MBA training. This augurs well for IDV (UK)'s future, in that they have established an additional cadre of good general managers.

Drawbacks to the Scheme?

From the company's point of view the programme was an unqualified success. As the first venture of its kind, it had inevitable teething troubles, but these were easily ironed out because there was such a strong commitment to succeed–commitment from the company, from IMCB and from the participants themselves.

From the participants' point of view, the programme put immense pressure on them as they struggled to balance their jobs and their domestic lives with their studies. But balancing such pressures is the very stuff of any top executive's life, and the sooner they learnt to handle it the better they would be. The participants were all warned in advance of the demands the course would make on their time. Senior executives tried to make allowances in exceptional circumstances for the fact that a manager was effectively doing two jobs. Senior managers also observed the relations of the MBA group with their colleagues and subordinates. At first there was some rivalry and dissatisfaction which rapidly disappeared as it was repeatedly emphasised to the participants that they were *not* an élite cadre in the organisation and that other managers would be expected to do the programme in the future (which did indeed happen).

Adapting the Principles

Clearly, it might not be possible to have an action learning MBA course tailor-made for one specific company: an organisation might be too small, and as the quality of the participants is a vital factor, there is inevitably a finite number of suitable candidates. The principles, however, remain the same: that for the right calibre of staff, such a programme is an invaluable long-term investment, and that a part-time programme linked as closely as possible to the company is the best method. Different benefits can, of course, be derived from a mixed regional group of ten to 12 MBA students from a number of different organisations — certainly this provides students with a broader knowledge of other companies and their cultures. It is even conceivable that executives from different parts of the world could, by distance-teaching methods, participate in these career-enhancing courses, with perhaps a two-week residential block of face-to-face tuition and discussions with their fellow students. In the modern age, the idea of global education within a multinational organisation should be seriously considered, so that all managers,

wherever they happen to work, have the opportunity to be developed and stretched, making them both more valuable to the company and more fulfilled in their work.

Conclusion

There are many tools of management development, for example diploma programmes, short courses on specific aspects of the business, YTS schemes, graduate intake programmes and so on. A company must have a total programme of management development covering many aspects–and from IDV (UK)'s experience, the action learning MBA scheme is a vital component.

The action learning MBA programme at IDV (UK) taught its participants to think like chief executives–indeed, it is hoped that many of them will eventually become either chief executives or general managers. They gained a generalist attitude to their jobs rather than the parochial specialist attitude that is encouraged and reinforced by the divisional structure of most companies.

In effect, the action learning MBA programme accelerated the participants' abilities to become effective senior managers. In one way, it can be seen as giving, say, five years' worth of experience in one year of combined work and studying. The programme broadened the perspectives of management, and in a more thorough and reliable fashion than the haphazard nature of work experience alone.

IDV (UK) was delighted with the results of the programme. Its senior management hope that their experience will encourage other companies to make similar investments for the future. And the ultimate benefit accruing to IDV (UK) from the MBA programme? No less than the very success of the organisation itself, where decision making and problem solving are now the domain of experienced, imaginative and well trained managers.

Allied Irish Bank in Britain: Organisational and Business Development through Action Learning

David Seekings International Management Centres, UK *talks to* Brian Wilson, Allied Irish Bank

The International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB) has been working with the Allied Irish Bank (AIB) in Britain for the past three years in a unique organisational and business development project which has fundamentally altered the bank's approach to its British market. Although the project is not yet complete, the bank is already benefiting from an upsurge in business activity and is expanding rapidly in Britain. What is more, the parent in Dublin is adapting the process for its use in Ireland.

In this article, David Seekings who, along with Professor Gordon Wills and William Giles, was involved throughout the programme, interviews Brian Wilson, General Manager, Allied Irish Bank, Britain, to find out what the bank felt about the programme, "warts and all".

Seekings: Brian, the Bank has invested heavily in terms of time and money in what some of your colleagues still call "the IMCB programme". What was the rationale behind the project — and why did you opt to work with IMCB?

Wilson: To answer this question, I have to go back a few years. In the early 1980s, we in AIB Britain were faced with a situation of being a successful, if somewhat traditional, bank in a rapidly changing competitive environment. We recognised that we had to move radically if a profitable core business was not to be undermined.

At the same time, we also recognised that the changes taking place in our marketplace offered opportunities for us too — if only we could be quick enough on our feet.

The bank decided that what was needed to respond effectively to changes around us was a fundamental re-appraisal of our business, of the roles and skills of our people and their attitudes. In other words, we decided to use management development, on a large scale throughout the organisation, as the main weapon with which to address the challenge which our changing competitive environment posed. I was appointed Group General Manager around that time and given the task of spearheading this new approach. Perhaps it would be helpful if I put Allied Irish Bank in context by telling you more about us.

Allied Irish Bank has a balance sheet size of $13 million, putting it on current standing at 195th in world rankings. We are Ireland's largest bank with an approximate market share in Ireland of 40 per cent of the banking sector. Our present size would put us 42nd in the European banking marketplace. We have been growing reasonably rapidly in recent years, both in terms of balance sheet

size and profitability, and in 1983 we acquired in America a controlling interest in the First National Bank of Maryland, which is based in Baltimore. Our stake in that bank is due to go to above 51 per cent towards the end of 1987 and if we consolidate our interest in Maryland that will move us in the banking league tables to approximately 150th.

The acquisition in Maryland has been a considerable success story for the bank, as has been our growth in the British marketplace. However, we have also made another unfortunate acquisition of an Irish insurance company which turned out very badly for us and was subsequently re-acquired by the state. I mention this just so that you can appreciate these are warts and all answers!

Allied Irish Bank made IR£102 million in 1986/87. It is a constituent of three banks which originally came together 21 years ago. One of our constituent banks, Provincial Bank of Ireland, which was founded in 1824, was, as we are not slow to point out, one of the pioneers of branch banking in the British Isles.

However, we really only commenced our expansion in the British marketplace in the 1970s. From small beginnings there we have grown a business to a point now which has a network of 65 branches (36 in branch banking), employs approximately 1,200 people in Britain in four different business units, has a balance sheet of approximately £2 billion and contributes approximately 25 per cent of the group's profitability. Our business has grown rapidly in recent years and in the last four to five years we have had a compound growth rate and profitability in excess of 20 to 25 per cent.

Our business in Britain was, naturally, focused on the Irish community in Britain, but we have long since grown in the wider market and now possibly 75 per cent of our business comes from the local community, though, naturally, we continue to recognise the importance of our ethnic connections and work hard on that side of our business.

Seekings: What problems faced you before you embarked on the project?

Wilson: I suppose we should start with the market environment. The last five years in Britain have seen a rapidly changing financial services marketplace. I use the word financial services advisedly. What we bankers traditionally thought of as the banking marketplace has now become a financial services arena with a whole variety of new players and a greatly increased level of competition. The new players included new entrants, such as insurance companies, brokers, foreign banks like city banks going "downstream" as, for example, in the case of Citibank Savings.

Competition was also increased by a series of regulatory changes, including the Consumer Credit Act, the Building Societies Act, which for the first time allowed building societies to provide unsecured personal advances to the consumer marketplace, and the Financial Services Bill which is going to change the way all of us do business. It all adds up to a picture of the decline of traditional barriers with an increasing free-for-all in the financial markets.

One particularly sobering financial statistic which perhaps best sums it up for us bankers is the fact that over the past three years demand deposits in branches of UK clearers have been declining by the rate of approximately six to seven per cent per annum — at the expense of non-banks, e.g. building societies.

Seekings: I see the problem. How was AIB measuring up against this background?

Wilson: We had rather a mixed bag. We had very successfully built our business up during the 1970s to a point where, as I described to you earlier, we had over 30 branches throughout Britain and a reasonable customer base. However, we were faced with a number of worrying limitations. We had a limited product base, for example, no high interest current accounts or automatic teller machines (ATMs) and our traditional products, particularly in the resource gathering deposit area, had seen a tail-off in growth and in some areas were indeed eroding.

We also had four rapidly growing and vigorous business units which were starting to step on one another's toes. The argument was put forward that it was a huge market and that there should be room for everyone. In reality, we found that a lot of our business was clustered together, both in geographic and customer terms, and there was a real danger of our starting to compete with ourselves. In our discussions with our staff, it was clear that they had a very sheltered and cosy view of our business environment. They were not sufficiently aware of the changes going on around them.

Their view of their customers was somewhat traditional too. We had been through a period of "prospecting" in the 1970s when we gathered a number of new customers. It was now as if we saw ourselves as harvesting the fruits of that effort. Customers now "came to us", and if they did not ask for something, it meant that they did not need it — at least in the minds of some of our managers. This most specifically manifested itself in the absence of sufficient hard selling, especially cold calling by our management teams.

Seekings: Faced with those concerns, what objectives did you set in designing your management development programme?

Wilson: It all had to start in the marketplace. We had to develop a real customer focus in the minds of our managers and staff and to enhance their selling skills. This had to be our first priority. And not just an aspiration. We needed an understanding of what "putting the customer first" really means in terms of attitude to work, to staff organisation. In this respect, we needed to improve the technical skills of our staff in terms of selling, negotiation, appreciation of buying needs and so on.

In a large marketplace like Britain we needed a series of ***detailed business plans*** and marketing strategies to address the different geographic marketplaces in which we were operating. We decided on nine geographic plans, ***not***, I would emphasise, ***financial budgets***, to be put together on a highly participative basis by the people who would ultimately be responsible for their implementation: the managers in the branches.

We were trying to put planning back where it belongs: with those at the coalface who would ultimately be responsible for implementation. This meant, in fact, introducing a "bottom-up" planning process to complement the conventional planning procedures of the bank.

Finally, it was crucial for us to develop a ***unified approach*** to our business in Britain. This was to enable us to maximise the scarce resources which we had at our disposal both in terms of support systems and skilled staff, to motivate our people to maximise business opportunities and to develop the team approach which we felt was so vital to our growth in the market.

Seekings: You decided to work with IMCB to develop the programme. Why did you choose what was, at that time, a very new, independent business school?

Wilson: We knew we did not want a conventional teaching programme, nor were we interested in working with consultants who *told* us what to do. We were attracted by IMCB's philosphy of *action learning* which, in its simplest form can be said to be learning by *doing* rather than being *told* how to do it. IMCB seemed to fit the bill: they were prepared to work with us to come up with a custom-made action learning programme. There was never any question of our being "sold" an adaptation of an off-the-shelf product.

Seekings: How did you go about the programme?

Wilson: Well, there were a number of stages and, indeed, setbacks which I would like to describe briefly, with the full benefit of hindsight, and recognising that this approach was particular to our circumstances in Britain and is not necessarily relevant to every other company embarking on such a programme.

We held, initially, a series of meetings with all our managers in the group in Britain, taking an afternoon for each meeting with a maximum of ten to 12 managers on each occasion, together with their line boss. At this meeting we requested the managers to prepare in advance a brief five-minute contribution outlining three areas where, in their opinion, the organisation could improve.

The reason for this approach was to ensure that the meetings were participatory in character and did not have a one-way flow about them. We used the traditional technique of having discussion groups to focus on the issues raised which we grouped under a series of headings. The meetings were held with a fair degree of publicity around our system and were valuable in a number of respects.

We were able to use the content from the meetings as a basic piece of input to the design of our management development programme. And we were also able to get a valuable insight into the degree of awareness of the need for change in our system. In fact, what we encountered was an amount of complacency and a low level of awareness of threats which seriously concerned us.

All managers were then divided into a series of teams and sent on a two-week start-up programme, split into parts and run by IMCB. The first week concentrated heavily on the development of new marketing skills, understanding the fundamental role of the customer, touching on such issues as product, price, promotion, plans, buying needs, decision making units, and the like. It also focused on issues of leadership and teamwork, using as a model the "Margerison/McCann" management wheel.

In the second week, we introduced the concept of detailed business planning to each team and helped them design a framework against which they would segment their local marketplaces. We encouraged them to elect a leader from within their teams and we appointed a line superior to work as a mentor to each group. At this point, we set a "profit gap" for each team. Having taken an average of performance over the previous three years, we then set a target or goal ten or 15 per cent greater than previously achieved. The purpose of this, as we explained to the teams, was to make the whole effort of planning worthwhile to set a high objective to shoot for.

Seekings: Were these demanding targets important to the process?

Wilson: Fundamental. We had to break the mould and force the teams to think of new ways of reaching their targets — it could not just be a "let us squeeze more out of the existing lemon" exercise. The targets were received, not surprisingly, with a degree of reluctance by most of the participants, as you might imagine; but we did stress to them that they would be free to come back if they felt that the target was unattainable, and to set different goals for us.

With the support of the external facilitators (IMCB), each team was required to do detailed research of the business potential in their own area, segmenting the market and focusing on the attractive segments. You will readily see that what we were, in fact, introducing was an action learning programme in its most practical form.

Time does not permit me to give you a detailed description of the process; suffice it to say that having segmented their markets and undertaken the requisite research, we then introduced a requirement to each group to prioritise between the segments. To do this they, had to spend a lot of time analysing the bank, its products, and, indeed, our competitors — from the customers' standpoint. It was something all of us found both difficult and illuminating. Having completed their analysis, we required each group to choose not more than three priority segments on which to focus. This caused quite a trauma for each group and it forced them to ask very hard and relevant questions about their business. It is very easy to design a plan which, in effect, focuses with equal force on all business opportunities around, and, of course, often results in nothing being done at all in relation to the plan. By introducing priorities like these, we made our managers think very carefully about their business and the profitability and potential of the customers in it.

Seekings: How did the programme develop in practice?

Wilson: Well, it was not without pain and difficulty. From the outset, it was quite a challenge, to keep the enthusiasm up for such a task among a group of people who were not used to the nature of the task involved and the hard work and research which it involved.

This required a tangible demonstration of commitment and belief on the part of senior managers, the other general managers and myself. We had to put ourselves around our system extensively. Of course, we had lots of setbacks. These included an industrial relations dispute in the middle of the programme which forced the whole programme to be set back for a period of six months and involved a re-start-up. The dispute created a lot of cynicism in our system, particularly from managers who were from different business cultural backgrounds.

Seekings: I know you are diffident about your own role. From my point of view I would say that your obvious, visible and whole-hearted commitment was fundamental to the success of the project. Without your drive and energy, the programme would have fallen down at the first hurdle. You also talk about the "mid-life crisis". What do you mean by this?

Wilson: By half-way through the process when people were right at the heart of the analysis and segmentation, many of the teams felt they were getting nowhere as they could not see a clearly defined finish line. This was action learning at

its best. It was particularly important at this stage to provide tangible evidence of senior management support and reassurance so that people kept with the programme.

Equally important was the need to drive the process on to a firm conclusion and we approached this in a very formal way. We required each team to produce a reasonably "glossy" planning document, and informed them several weeks in advance of a deadline date and a meeting at which the general managers of the Bank in Britain would attend with the team and at which they would be required to make a formal presentation on their plan. We deliberately arranged this meeting in their own geographic location rather than head office and made a point of stressing its formality and importance.

This may seem a small issue, but quite often managers in line functions are not used to making presentations or to all the work that goes into slide preparation, etc, and the sheer psychological pressures and impact of preparing those presentations and practising for them in itself helped to drive home the importance of the plan and the processes involved.

Incidentally, as you well know, we also used the technique of providing each team with an external facilitator to help them with their presentations. You were able to point out to the teams many areas in which their presentation might appear negative or unduly critical and to get the message across to them about the need for positiveness, commitment and ownership of what they were presenting and proposing.

Our external IMCB facilitator was important in other ways: he was able to make critical comments against the objective background of the plan which he would not have been able to get away with in another environment. He was able to pick up on negative or critically focused presentations and persuade the managers to take a positive ownership and selling role towards what they were presenting.

Seekings: Was the process entirely "bottom-up"?

Wilson: No, simultaneous to the area team process, we had to start the development of formal "top-down" plans from the heads of the business functions in Britain, hopefully designed to meet with and synchronise the "bottom-up" plans coming from our branch system.

Seekings: I understand you feel that "ownership" of the plans was an important issue?

Wilson: Absolutely. Too often plans are prepared by people who do not have to live with the results and follow-on consequence of their recommendations. Our "bottom-up", "top-down" planning process was designed to confront this difficulty and to give direct ownership and participation to the implementers of the bank's new strategies.

Seekings: How did you respond to the area team presentations?

Wilson: This was an essential part of the process. In many organisations, and certainly in AIB, plans or reports are prepared with great care and attention to detail, received by senior management and then sometimes finish up in bottom drawers or with, at best, a tardy response. In this instance, we had set the deadline that general management and myself were required to receive the document a week in advance, and I made sure they had read and studied each document

carefully — a difficult enough task in itself, I can assure you. We then travelled to, and received the formal presentation from, the managers and had a two-hour question and answer session on each plan afterwards. We deliberately attempted, at these sessions, to be fairly forceful and penetrating in our questions so that each team felt they had been through a full process of critical appraisal and analysis. Following on the meetings, we ensured we wrote back formally to each team within three weeks with a full detailed written response to their plans.

Seekings: You mentioned your "top-down" process; how did you dovetail this with the "bottom up" plans?

Wilson: This was a demanding task. We had to put together all the various components which had been built over the proceeding months into a formal group plan for our business unit in Britain. This involved amalgamating the inputs from the individual branch manager plans from the nine geographic areas and making sure there was a good fit between these "bottom-up" and "top-down" plans, as we described them, of the head of the various business units of the corporate, retail banking, small business, etc. Needless to say, in an exercise of this complexity, a perfect fit was not possible, but there was a reasonably strong degree of synchronisation and correlation between the group plans and those of the individual units. Indeed, in the months preceding the finalisation of the individual plans, we had been attempting to anticipate the requirements and needs that were emerging from our system so that in our group plan we were being seen, and were ourselves able, to respond to the needs of our system and to the business direction in which were going.

Seekings: So far, you have only described how managers were involved in the programme. What about the rest of the staff?

Wilson: This was clearly important — we did not want staff to think that we were doing something secret behind closed doors. We therefore developed an additional series of marketing effectiveness programmes. First of all a *customer service programme* with all the staff in our individual branches, involving them in the process, getting them to understand the issues behind the programme and to design specific tasks and selling programmes for each individual member of staff.

Incidentally, something which might be commonplace to retailers — but is not normal in banking — we now have weekly "in-store" training for all our branch staff. We also designed a *cross-selling programme,* the objective of which was to ensure that we obtained maximum added value from each existing or potential customer relationship of AIB's business units.

In many ways, these were one of the richest parts of the whole programme, as we found, the further we went down the organisation, the greater was the responsiveness to the management development programmes and the opportunity to participate in influencing the direction of the business which these involved. More junior managers we found had less cynicism and more idealism and enthusiasm than some of their more seasoned colleagues. It certainly gave us all great hope for the future.

Seekings: What did you achieve out of all of this?

Wilson: There are three types of gains I would like to focus on. The overall gains, as we saw them, some specific gains and some which, without any great

originality, I describe as "other" or those particularly related to some benefits that we did not expect to be derived from the programme.

The most important overall benefit from our programme has perhaps been a focused business direction for our businesses in Britain. This may sound somewhat trite, but it is terribly important in our experience. We now know what it is we want to do in the market. We have shared ownership, throughout our managers, for the direction in which we are trying to take the business.

We have also managed to define and agree with our managers the priorities on which we should be focusing in the marketplace, and, in the process, we have achieved some important breakthroughs for we bankers like, for example, the idea of shedding unprofitable customers or focusing on those with greater potential. We now have our whole series of agreed strategies and tactics with which to address the priority marketplaces and a geographically based set of detailed plans with which to implement these.

A crucial gain for us has been the group-wide ownership which we have achieved of our plans and business direction. As you will have gathered, the process has been heavily participative, and this has resulted in a very widely held understanding and association with what we are trying to achieve.

There are also a number of useful, specific and positive outcomes. Perhaps the most important among these, certainly for us as a bank, was the enhanced customer awareness which the programme achieved for us. The selling skills of our managers and staff were significantly improved. In particular, the more sharp-edged skills such as closing deals, negotiating constructively and identifying key decision takers in businesses, to name just a few.

Another significant gain was the increase in personal self-confidence on the part of our managerial staff. The work they had undertaken obviously gave them an enhanced awareness and knowledge of their local marketplace which is vital in attacking their business, but that increased knowledge, and the conclusions which they have drawn from it, has also significiantly enhanced their own self-belief and willingness to take new intitiatives.

We got a cross-selling programme into place for the first time which showed actual tangible business results. There has been an increasing knowledge and consequent improved relations between the managers in our different business units. There was a recognition of complementary skills and of the potential of working more closely together, particularly among those focusing on similar markets.

Seekings: How did the teams respond to the initial targets?

Wilson: Well, perhaps the most obvious thing is that the business has gained a series of tough specific business goals which have now been set with the full ownership of management and staff because they are in effect ***their*** targets. The profit gap, to which I referred earlier, has indeed been closed, and in many instances teams came up with target objectives higher than the ones we had set them. In only one instance did a team come in with lower goals and we were prepared to accept these readily because it was in a tough geographic area. There is, we believe, a high motivation among individuals to achieve the targets set, and this is reinforced by the team building processes which we have successfully got under way.

Seekings: You mentioned some unexpected benefits. What were these?

Wilson: There were several additional bonuses. The first was a considerably enhanced product demand from among our management and staff. This may sound strange to those who are not from the banking industry, but, in previous times, we in banking had a very simplistic view of the world as just lenders of money and did not appreciate the need to package this more effectively or to recognise that the private individual does not necessarily want or see a loan as an attractive product in itself.

With a relatively tight core of support systems and given the highly participative way in which we went about the programme, this put considerable pressures on our system and forced the managers away from their offices for considerable periods. In turn, this required substantially increased levels of delegation in the system. The response of the more junior members of staff was very positive and the managerial capabilities of our managers were definitely enhanced.

A further gain for us was at least a temporary lowering of the barriers of suspicion between head office and support functions in our branch system. The work that our branch teams had to put into the design of their plans and, indeed, their presentations, gave them a much enhanced awareness of the complexities of change and the work that goes into such areas and, albeit temporily perhaps, a more sympathetic attitude to their colleagues working in the support functions and at the centre.

Seekings: All this presents a very rosy picture. I cannot believe you did not experience problems along the way.

Wilson: We not only experienced problems, we also made mistakes along the way. First, we were very under-resourced. In Britain we had a very small Head Office function with most of our management team focused in the line, as indeed, it should be. Consequently, when we got into this major development programme and the planning processes attendant to it, we put very great pressure on our systems and on our people. Inevitably some areas had to give, and at times there were some costs to be borne in terms of lost business opportunity or productivity.

A further difficulty for us, and this is a problem endemic in the banking industry, was the relatively limited quality of our Management Information Systems. Banking traditionally is a very transaction-focused business and it has not, in the past, met the need to focus on the sort of management information which would be commonplace in other industries.

At one level this was a significant problem for us, but in another it resulted in some very creative work and solutions going on within our system, and has made us focus more aggressively, and actively, on this area to some considerable effect, and we hope to see some significant gains in the future.

An on-going problem for us was the pressures which the programme created in the day-to-day operations of our business. The programme was often used as a somewhat lame excuse to explain poor performance in other areas. The only acceptable response we found to this was, of course, to reject it totally as a reason and to stress to managers that what they were involved in was considered part of their day-to-day job.

Clearly, many of our managers found it difficult to reconcile short-term needs with long-term objectives. This was a considerable difficulty for those who had not been exposed to anything other than the usual annual budgetary processes in the past. Because of the different business units involved in our structure, we had to evolve the concept of a mentor, who was a senior executive for one of the business units, responsible for each team. He did not have a line role in relation to the team, and the design and implementation of this position was difficult and never fully resolved to our satisfaction. Those were some of the problems we encountered. Let us look more specifically now at some of the mistakes we made in the introduction and implementation of the programme.

Passive leadership. — For me, perhaps the most serious error I made in the introduction of this programme was to tolerate passive or uninvolved leadership from a number of key executives in the system. We discussed the programme extensively and came to a decision to introduce it. From that point on, I should have ensured that every member of the team took active ownership and participation. I paid a heavier price afterwards for those people from whom I tolerated indifference or veiled antagonism to the introduction of this approach.

Lack of senior management ownership. — A second crucial error was to allow a number of senior executives in crucial support functions not to have an on-going role in the programme. All senior executives in the bank were brought through the initial training phase, but many were not given on-going roles afterwards. They subsequently became what we described as the "watchers on the shore", quick to criticise the work of their colleagues and their absence from the office; because they had no ownership in the programme, they had no reason to wish to see it succeed and, that they indeed found when they had subordinates who were involved away from the office, it became a positive irritant to them.

Limited communication. — Because of this inadequate communication, there was a lot of suspicion and resistance on the part of junior members of staff which had to be overcome when the process finally did impinge upon them.

A third error we made was in the level of communication to staff in the organisation as a whole. We foolishly presumed that our briefing system with our managers would ensure that the staff were informed as to where their managers had disappeared. This was a naïve assumption on our part. In retrospect, we should have had a much more fully developed programme of communication. I should also have spent some more time liaising with my senior colleagues in AIB in Dublin who were initially mystified and subsequently frustrated by the pressures which the work was imposing on our staff.

Too many changes. — We also accommodated too many requests for changes or modification in programme design. At various stages, we found some people looking for recreation facilities, others for more pre-course material and a subsequent group for less pre-course material. Some required changes in the hotel, some were happy with the hotel. The basic message I would draw from all this is, once you have got a format and a basic location, unless some serious issues arise, stick to your game plan and do not allow yourself to be diverted from it.

Too long a "time out". — We permitted too long a gap to occur after the completion of the various plans before we got into the implementation phase. I

perhaps, in retrospect, was too tolerant in my assumption that people needed a break from the rigours of this more formal approach to our business. Once you allow people to get off the treadmill at all in a process like that, they quickly assume that it has just been a phase which they can put behind them and return to their old ways. I mentioned earlier how important it was to respond formally to our plans. Whenever we deviated from this, we found that we got a disproportionate negative response from staff.

Little short-term delivery — Another mistake we made was not giving sufficient tangible evidence to the system of the new approach we had undertaken. This was particularly noticeable to junior staff. If we had delivered in the short term a number of, for example, say, new products, or evidences of the "wind of change", we might have obtained more credibility at an earlier stage in the programme.

Seekings: That was a frank description of the problems you encountered during the programme. It is a well known axiom that 80 per cent of business plans are never implemented. How are you overcoming this?

Wilson: Perhaps the most crucial decision we have taken in regard to our plans is to make every aspect of them specifically accountable with clear responsibility residing with individuals throughout our organisation. In this respect we are clearly moving the whole process firmly into the line of our organisation in a heavily participative way. The advisers and facilitators from IMCB who worked with us in the design and introductory phases have been moved back to the wings or eliminated completely and the system now clearly understands, through a series of specific goals, targets and reviews processes, exactly what must be achieved.

We also undertook a very wide-ranging capability assessment of the goals and targets we set ourselves in our plan. It was a very sobering exercise and it has set in train a number of remedial actions. I would certainly commend it to everyone designing or developing any new strategies in their business.

In developing our plans, we have also continued to narrow the focus of our direct attack. I mentioned earlier the three priority segments that we concentrated on. We have, since then, sharpened our approach even more, and, in the year ahead, have set ourselves limited but highly specific goals in regard to specific target business segments.

Finally, it is absolutely vital, in designing a plan like this, to ensure that the financial plans of the organisation in the budgetary processes are linked in clearly to the longer-term strategic plans. This has been a crucial and important element in ensuring effective implementation.

Seekings: In reality, you have been using marketing development as a means of organisational and individual development throughout the bank. How do you feel your bank and the people in it have developed as a consequence of the programme?

Wilson: One significant change in the bank has been the increased two-way flows of information up and down our system. Most feedback from below in an organisation is negative: "I cannot do this because I am too busy, short of resources" and so on. Through the "bottom-up" "top-down" system and the consequent interaction of this, we have been able to obtain a lot of positive feedback, on our business, on the needs of our customers out in the marketplace, and on how we can overcome our problems.

The result of all this has been an increased level of business awareness in the bank in terms of the business direction we are taking and the priorities we must focus on. Our managers and staff are much less naïve than they were, both in terms of their own customers and, indeed, the competition.

We have also been able to enchance significantly the level of teamwork throughout our system and to improve the understanding of how teams function effectively. The follow-on from what has been a gradual breakdown in barriers of suspicion between different members of our organisation is that they have begun to focus on the important priority of (the common enemy!) the customer.

In organisational terms, one of the more significant benefits has been the increased involvement of our staff in business activity. Traditionally, banking has been a transaction and administration-centred activity. We believe that our staff are now more involved in the more important areas of business in planning and in doing. Individuals have benefited too: their jobs have been enriched by their being involved in growing the business. We all work together more effectively, and our communication, selling and negotiation skills have been positively enhanced.

Finally, I believe we have managed to re-motivate a number of our managerial staff, who had perhaps become complacent or switched off over a period of years, through the participative process involved, and that participation carries much more ownership for the direction in which we are trying to bring business.

However, the ultimate test must be — what does all this mean to our customer and to our long-term profitability? We are in the process of asking our customers some searching questions about AIB and its service. Our long-term profitability? . . Well I remain optimistic.

Seekings: Thank you.

Tailpiece

The AIB business development programme is extensive, far reaching and on-going. It is not a short, one-off exercise — the bank is engaged in a rolling five-year plan. The early benefits are already showing through. AIB in Britain is making record profits and, while Brian Wilson stresses there is still much to be done, he can be well satisfied with progress to date.

One might be tempted to ask whether he could quantify the cost benefit of the programme. The response would probably be a smile and words to the effect that he does not know where the bank would have been had it not embarked on the programme, but that it would certainly not be where it is today!

Marketing and Selling at Work: The IMCB/NatWest Management Development Programme

by
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Introduction

Article after article has appealed for marketing to take its rightful place within banks: namely, front and centre. Authors before ourselves have shown the need for a more aggressive, affirmative marketing stance. The historical reasons have been well chronicled.

It is not our intention here to expand on this theme by offering new evidence to support the view that banking's comfortable, secure days are over. One assumes every reader of this journal is only too aware that this is true, and that something needs to be done. It is the intention in this article to show how the need is being met, to answer the appeals by describing what we have done to help banks radically change their orientation.

In doing so, we are following on the work of a colleague, John Cheese[1], who showed how the remote posture conventionally assumed by banks was challenged and ultimately upset. He alluded to a certain bank's decision to overturn convention by becoming more marketing conscious, and stated that the decision led to a unique sales training programme. It is our intention here to describe that programme in detail, and examine its obstacles, results and benefits.

Asking the Question

The National Westminster Bank (NatWest) was not the only one of Britain's "Big Four" banks to realise by the end of the 1970s that the safe foundation on which banks had built their business was crumbling. Looking back, NatWest remembers its concern and admits its naiveté. It knew there was a problem, but had almost no idea of how to deal with it. That admission was probably the most crucial act the bank could make. It is an admission which many organisations fail to make, and is so much of the reason why they remain static, or even decline.

The question must be asked. It is essential to the development of any person or organisation. Revans[2] knew this in the 1940s and went on to develop Action Learning as the tool for asking intelligent questions and honestly searching for innovative answers. What am I (or my firm) really trying to do, first and last? What is stopping me (or my firm) from doing it? What can I (or my firm) contrive to do about it?

Managers at NatWest had the courage to admit their perplexity in the face of alarming competition. They knew something had to be done, but did not know how to do it. At least they asked the question.

Their next act was to look outside themselves for the answer. This, too, showed foresight. Banking is an incestuous business: most senior executives began in the bank (usually the same one) and rose up the management ladder, elevating themselves by climbing on the shoulders of the person beneath them. The horizon broadened, certainly, but the orientation remained the same.

Like most organisations of its size, NatWest has its own training department and effectively implements its own training programmes. The attitude was, and still very much is, that bankers know best about banking. This attitude caused a resistance which became one of the major obstacles to be removed later on. Nevertheless, NatWest realised that outside forces were becoming so threatening that it would have to look beyond itself to combat them: deregulation, automation, foreign competition, popularity of non-banking financial institutions—these and other marketplace factors drove the bank beyond its own city-cloistered walls.

A prime catalyst for the revolution which followed was a course run at the bank's own training centre, Heythrop Park, by Charles Margerison. "The Role of the Manager" had such a good reception that the bank approached Margerison and Wills, of IMCB, the International Management Centre from Buckingham.

What should they do? NatWest knew it needed to improve its marketing activity, but where and how? Before the question could be answered, the bank's training needs had to be fully assessed. This involved lengthy, detailed discussions with area directors and marketing managers in particular, probing into the bank's culture, its own ways of doing things, and identifying weaknesses. Objectives were then created and a full, bank-wide programme designed.

Changing a Culture

What did the bank want? Most importantly, for it is its business to ask, what would it get for its money? The answer was not "a training programme". Training was ancillary to IMCB's involvement. The bank needed and, more to its credit, wanted to change its culture. That is what we were asked to do—not to run programmes at Heythrop, not to produce first-class training materials, not to bring in top-notch tutors. We did all those things and more, but they were not our objectives. Those were the tools which helped us implement the real objective, helped the bank face the real challenge: changing its culture.

If the bank wanted to remain a marketplace leader, it had to acquire two essential qualities of leadership: knowledge and control. It needed to know about its market and know how to serve it. It also needed to change its orientation, to look forward and thereby exert more control over both its present and future.

Change is a complex process. It is also a fact of a healthy organisation's life. Banking, on the other hand, was an industry in danger of decay. Declining organisations can often attribute their problems to the marketplace, and unfriendly forces therein were indeed threatening the banks. But internal decline can also threaten an organisation. Greiner[3] described such internal decline by identifying three main signs of decay: the organisation is more orientated to the past than to the future; it recognises "the obligation of ritual" more than the challenges of current problems; allegiance is frequently owed more to departmental goals than corporate objectives.

Several approaches can be used to change an organisation. Greiner's research showed that the most successful way was to adopt a shared approach, where group decision making and problem solving were the key features. His studies further showed that the most successful change patterns were those which spread throughout the organisation, including and affecting as many people as possible. This ultimately produces attitudinal change, which is necessary for any substantial and long-lasting change in any organisation.

His criteria were very much ours. The patterns he observed in organisations which had successfully managed change match the methods used in action learning, and became the methods adopted by IMCB. It usually involves the introduction of an outside force, in this case, us. The "change agent" provides ideas and suggestions for change within the organisation. These are then tried out on a small scale, with change spreading through continuous application until it is gradually absorbed.

Creating and running a programme to effect this change had its own special problems and challenges, but none was as dynamic or as essential as that of selling the central objective. Just as the structure of this article delegates any description of the programme to a secondary position, so did the structure of our approach. Everything else became bricks and mortar.

This was not an easy approach to sell. Banking is a structured, hierarchical industry. Participants on our programme were not happy about being called salesmen. Yet, adopting a selling stance was one of the main changes which had to occur in the bank. The days of the bank manager resting behind his desk to greet hordes of patient petitioners are finished. It was our intention to remove the bank manager from behind his desk, to open the door for the customer. Before designing any programme, we had to convince senior managers that the approach was essential. Fortunately, key individuals were quick to perceive the issue. The first hurdle had been overcome. The men at the top agreed that nothing short of radical change was necessary.

Why a Business School?

As we noted earlier, and were to hear incessantly, bankers know best about banking. They are not accustomed to going outside their speciality for advice about their work. Quite rightly, they emphatically believe that the intricacies of finance are best left to the professionals.

It was not our intention, however qualified our tutors might be, to teach finance. It was our intention to show that money was just another product to be marketed and sold. Bank managers are managers and salesmen; however refined their particular expertise may be, they must understand and serve their customers as conscientiously as any retailer, if not more.

The principles of marketing and selling are not unique to any industry. NatWest managers are now as quick to do a SWOT analysis as any manager in another business. That was not the case three years ago. The distinctive characteristic of IMCB is that we are wholly committed to transferring theory to practice. As educationalists and business practitioners, we know a good deal about marketing. Any business school should be able to claim that expertise. But not every school

sets as its prime objective the integration of theory with practice at the manager's own work place. IMCB does and therefore roots its programmes in the organisation; the distinction is important. With an organisation the size of NatWest, the conventional campus-based business school would not have become immersed, as we did, in the organisation.

To change the culture, we had to understand the existing behaviour and attitudes of the bank. The training needs analysis partly achieved this, but it was really only when we got to work with the bankers that we could totally empathise with their needs and methods.

Going to Work

The objective was simple: revitalise the marketing function by training bank staff in marketing and selling skills. The task was formidable. How could the bank possibly afford to train every one of its 70,000 worldwide staff, or even its managers in its 3,200 branches? Yet, there was no other way around the problem. Banking is a highly personalised industry: it is of no use whatsoever to have regional managers knowing about marketing if the cashier dismisses each customer with barely a glance. The effects of new knowledge had to be carried through the bank, from the top manager to the person at the end of the "enquiries" bell. Expertise needed to cascade from top to bottom. The inertia of the bank could only be overwhelmed by a surge of new energy, by harnessing the power of momentum.

The strategy was to start at the top and use the bank's own resources to carry the training through. This meant that those responsible for training bank managers in marketing would first be trained by us. They, in turn, would train the people for whom they were responsible, operating in a cell fashion. The management structure in NatWest does not follow a simple line movement, as Figure 1 indicates.

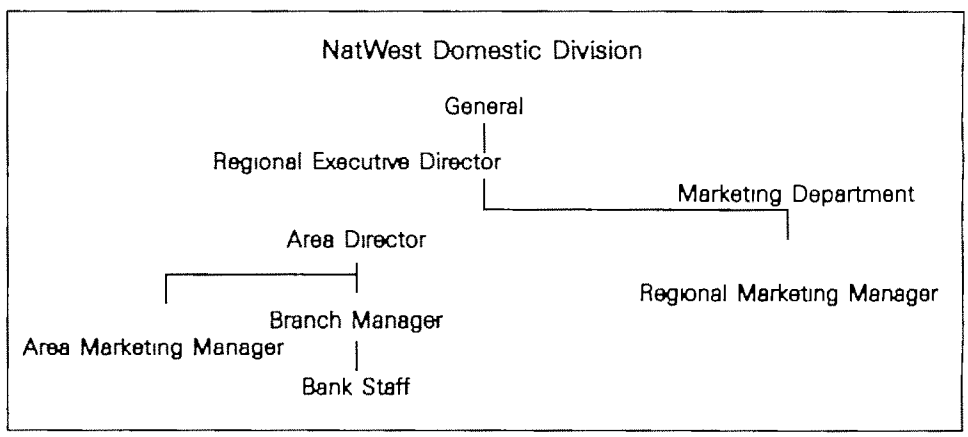


Figure 1.

It was, therefore, not possible to expect training to carry through in a straight line as might be expected in other organisations. Branch managers, for example, are not directly responsible to the area marketing manager, yet it is the area marketing manager who is responsible for area marketing operations. The area

marketing manager is not directly responsible to the regional marketing manager, yet they must work closely together to conduct marketing activities. A programme had to be structured to allow effective training without alienating any one group, and without key people taking umbrage.

The Programme Takes Shape

The key to changing the culture of the bank lay in the cascade approach mentioned earlier. The initial focus was to be on the work of area marketing managers who were responsible for the marketing activities of branch managers in their areas. It was decided to use a four-pronged approach:

(1) introduce area marketing managers to the concepts of marketing and the bank's marketing policy;
(2) introduce personal selling skills;
(3) train area marketing managers in personal selling skills, and
(4) provide them with the skills and resources to run marketing and selling training events for branch managers.

Regional marketing managers underwent a separate training process with the objective of introducing and reinforcing concepts of marketing and selling, particularly marketing planning. Area directors became involved with area marketing managers during one-week sessions at the end of the area marketing managers' programme.

The pilot area marketing managers' programme was launched in May 1982. Initial response was mixed. Participants reacted strongly against the "salesman" role and criticised teaching materials for being too strong on selling and not strong enough on banking. By the second programme, in November, participants were warming to the selling idea and received more positively teaching materials which included numerous examples from their own bank. A third session was run in June 1983, and the final session occurred that autumn.

The teaching resources created for NatWest included a text "Selling Financial Services", a binder of case studies and exercises relevant to banking, a set of overhead transparencies, two videos and a tutor's guide. All were neatly packaged to provide a portable resource for the area marketing manager to use in his area. It allowed him to organise his own training sessions for bank managers, as and when appropriate. By the time his own training was finished, the area marketing manager was conversant with all the teaching materials and had gained a greater understanding of both the ideas to be taught, and methods of doing so.

Distance Teaching

The resources we prepared for the bank are good examples of the distance teaching approach central to IMCB's practice. Distance teaching is quite different from distance learning, the correspondence style of course offered by organisations like the Open University. Studying by correspondence primarily means studying alone, or at best with a television or tape recorder. It also means that the learner and teaching institution are separated by distance, objectives, experience and culture.

The aim of distance *teaching*, on the other hand, is to provide organisations with teaching resources designed for their particular business—whether that is selling fast-moving industrial goods or financial services.

Our participation can take many forms. We sometimes run sessions to teach managers certain skills before they teach others, as with NatWest, or we offer a complete resource kit for the experienced training manager. The method demands on-the-spot coaching by trainers; managers are not left to learn via dead objects.

Distance teaching is also cost-effective. An organisation the size of NatWest could not possibly afford to send all its managers to a school, or even have a school come on to the premises to run "tailor-made" programmes. What it needed was to have the advantage of the school's expertise, without the school. The bank needs to teach itself, within itself, for years to come. That is the objective of distance teaching. The results were dramatic: in the first year of the programme, 30 per cent of the bank's domestic division branch managers had been trained by their area marketing managers. By the end of 1984, all will have been trained.

Further resources were created for "area support teams" who helped train the full range of bank staff. Their activities ranged from producing cards for staff with the benefits and features of each product, to handing out leaflets at tube stations about season ticket loans.

International Banking

The activities described so far show how we worked with NatWest's Domestic Division, both in the corporate and personal banking sectors. We also developed the approach for account executives in the International Banking Division along much the same lines.

"Selling Financial Services Internationally" described how the account executive could use personal selling skills and market awareness when developing a relationship with corporate treasurers. Extensive interviews with account executives provided material which made the text bank-specific.

Initial reaction was again sceptical, even more so than we found with the Domestic Division. International bankers are firmly convinced that their job is unique. The objective of the programme was therefore to help account executives learn about selling and marketing and improve their personal selling skills.

Results and Benefits

Feedback

The marketing department at NatWest monitored the programme throughout and sought feedback at the end. They report that feedback has been extremely favourable. Managers say that they not only know more about selling and marketing, but have the confidence to use the new skills.

Changed Roles

Many bank managers once believed that keeping a good balance sheet and "our nose clean" was all there was to the job. Now, they realise their future job depends on personal selling skills. Managers are much more likely to need to sell a customer up the line, rather than simply approve a loan request. This means that they must

often refer the customer to bank experts in other areas, such as insurance, vehicle leasing, etc. The manager now works much more as part of a team, recognising that his service to the customer is to "sell the bank". Products are introduced in a benefit-aware, instead of feature-aware, fashion.

Changed Attitudes

Only so much substantial attitude change can occur within any generation. It is generally expected to take an entire generation before any given attitudes are truly reversed or supplanted. The most significant change will therefore happen in the future. For the bank, this now means the foreseeable future. Young trainee managers are being brought up through the ranks in a totally different environment from their predecessors. Today's environment is a selling environment, not a comfortable cocoon.

They are learning to see bank management as financial and business development. They see money as a product, and clients as customers. The long-term effects of this are formidable.

Chain Reaction

The marketing department at NatWest reports feedback from sources outside the bank. Reaction from other banks in both the UK and overseas has been one of keen interest and admiration.

"Light years ahead of us" is how another bank described NatWest. It later went on to investigate the programme further and we ultimately agreed with them to develop a similar programme for their needs in Australia. The IMCB/Westpac programme evolved along the same principles as the NatWest programme, with regional managers trained to take the marketing message through the bank during 1983. Teaching materials were adapted for the Australian market, although the general concepts of selling and marketing remained unchanged. The feedback, again, is that it has worked.

Continuing Management Development

One of the criticisms against business schools, justifiably expressed in the past by paymasters in business and industry, is that programmes are often concluded without sufficient follow-up. This is almost unavoidable with campus-based courses. Once the participant leaves the school and returns to work, the teacher's role is over. This in some way explains why participants on such programmes often feel disillusioned and at a loss when it comes to actually implementing new knowledge. The IMCB approach largely overcomes this problem by keeping the programme within the organisation. Even so, management development must be an on-going process, with managers developing progressively as they enter new stages of experience and acquire new responsibilities.

A distance teaching resource is an effective mechanism for continuing management development. Training programmes can be staged to include different elements, or a change in emphasis, at different times. Most importantly, it allows an organisation to bring a large number of people quickly to a common level of experience and understanding. "Add-ons" are then less expensive and operate more efficiently.

Whatever route is chosen, it is apparent that some banks at least are taking serious measures to promote continuous management development and ensure that their culture changes with their environment. Action learning was an important part of NatWest's development. It is not surprising that it now calls itself "the action bank".

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Developing Skills for Matrix Management*

by
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Origins

Alan Mumford from the International Management Centre from Buckingham was originally invited to meet three Ford managers — two from their Industrial Relations (Personnel) function and one line manager who had been seconded to operate as "employee involvement manager". The particular part of Ford to be discussed was the Product Development Group (PDG), which is part of the Ford of Europe Organisation. At that time PDG had around 4,000 staff operating near London and Cologne.

After a general briefing on their perceptions of Ford, the discussion turned to a more particular analysis of some current management issues. PDG had carried out a major comparative study on a Japanese car firm, and as a consequence had identified the need to change both the structure of the organisation and the style of management. These changes had not been fully defined or agreed at the time of these first discussions, but subsequently PDG adopted a form of matrix management. This involved the creation of a Programme Management Structure in which complete car programmes became the organisational base instead of the previous separate functional processes.

The other major input had been a large meeting of Ford managers worldwide attended by 20 of PDG's top managers. This meeting had looked at a number of major problems and opportunities in Ford, and had moved into a discussion led by consultants on the desirability of, and necessary processes for, a more participative management style. At the time of briefing, Alan Mumford, the Vice President Product Development and his team had been attempting to work on the principles of a more participative management process for the past six months. There was, however, some concern, both within the top team and at levels below it, that statements about a more participative management style had not yet been fully implemented. The top team, which had been exposed to some formal educational processes on participative management, thought it desirable that the levels below them should also receive some formal training. Discussions had been held with a number of organisations who might provide some such training. The proposal which Alan

* We are grateful to the Ford Motor Company, first, for the opportunity of working with them on the issues described here, and, secondly, for agreeing that we might write this article. We should, however, emphasise that the views expressed here are ours, and not necessarily those of our clients at Ford.

Mumford made, and which became the basis for the work described here, differed significantly in approach from the other proposals received by Ford. Firstly, it was his view that it was essential to look at the top team first rather than to propose immediately training for the levels of management below them. Secondly, he considered that the review should concentrate on the realities of what was being attempted and had been achieved so far, rather than starting with the "well-known" skills of participative management which Ford "ought" to introduce.

Alan Mumford's proposed brief was discussed with senior Ford PDG managers and finally was agreed and circulated by the Vice-President of Product and Development. It is important to note that the principle of using an outside consultant in this way was itself discussed participatively by the top management group. It is also most relevant that, unlike some other areas in Ford, PDG agreed to start with its top team.

Diagnosis and Report

The main method of collecting information about what had been achieved and what was now necessary was through individual discussions with 24 managers in London and Cologne, supplemented with observation of the top team at work in several management meetings. A list of ten topics provided full opportunity for discussion. Examples of topics discussed were —

- What do you understand by "autocratic" and "participative" in the Ford context?
- What progress and problems have you experienced in attempting to carry through the new principles agreed?
- Consider the managerial behaviour of your bosses; what do they do that helps or hinders you in the effective performance of your job?
- Consider your own managerial behaviour; what kinds of behaviour are rewarded, not rewarded, punished?

It had been agreed that the results of these diagnostic interviews should be given to the top management group in a specially arranged meeting, and that this should be done orally rather than through a detailed written report. This chosen process was designed to encourage participative discussion of the report as a whole. In view of some major sensitivities, a summary of the major findings and recommendations was given in advance to the Vice-President Product Development and the Industrial Relations Manager (the equivalent of Personnel Director). Neither of them attempted to influence the final report to their colleagues. The Vice President said: "Some of your feedback is uncomfortable to hear, but we need to hear it."

The report was presented and discussed at a full day off-site meeting. It is not appropriate to reveal here the full detail of that report. Given the major nature of the changes which they were seeking to make it was not surprising that they were encountering problems in implementing their good intentions. Some of the difficulties they had experienced were:

- Disagreement about the meaning in operational terms of words like participation, consensus.

- While the nature of approved managerial behaviour had been clear and consistent although not articulated before, the nature of a "now desired" managerial behaviour was not wholly clear and had not been articulated.
- There was disagreement about the extent to which participative management processes had been adopted, even by the top group; this was illustrated by one management decision which was claimed by some managers to have been arrived at by consensus, and by others not to have been so decided.

In his comments about the information he had received, Alan Mumford identified a number of issues of which the most relevant to this article were:

- The need for a clearly defined and agreed definition of decision-taking processes, where he suggested the use of "I tell", "I share", "we agree".
- The definition and acceptance of new desired managerial behaviour such as openness, confrontation, explicit feedback.
- The definition of roles within the programme management structure.

He recommended two processes for the top management group itself. The first was a workshop for that group, and the second was the idea of an on-going process consultant to help the top management group and other management teams below it. In addition, managers below the top level would have a more extensive workshop based on the same principles.

The report was discussed by the top group in three separate sections — data, comments, recommendations. The Vice-President himself illustrated the decision-making processes identified by stating that the decision about the recommendations would be made by general agreement — a "we agree" rather than an "I tell" decision-making process. The final decision was to go ahead with the top group workshop, to put the idea of process consultancy on one side for the time being, and to defer decision on the middle management workshops until the top team workshop had been experienced.

The Top Team Workshop

Peter Honey joined Alan Mumford for the design and implementation of this workshop. The design of the workshop reflected primarily the concerns expressed by the top team during the diagnostic discussions and the subsequent review. In terms of the process used, however, it reflected the proposals made by us. It is worth emphasising that the proposal we made, while being in our view both more realistic and therefore more effective, was also more risky to us as designers and to the participants.

It was clearly essential that the workshop should address the issue of clarification of terms and the absence of clear action plans identified during the diagnosis. We suggested, and the top management group accepted, two more ambitious objectives. First, we designed the whole workshop so that decisions during it were reached by clearly stated prior criteria for process. It would be clear whether a decision was being communicated by the Vice-President (I tell), or whether an issue was being shared (I share), or whether it was something on which full agreement was sought (we agree). It was also agreed that although the major

purpose of the workshop was to work on, and determine, the issues of Employee Involvement and Programme Management, the team should also tackle some agenda items to provide an even more powerful illustration of the decision-making process. The objectives for the workshop therefore became to:

- set aims, objectives and performance measurements for Employee Involvement (EI) and Programme Management (PM);
- review and prepare plans for dealing with all major problems in EI and PM;
- agree common language for EI and PM;
- contribute to the design of next level workshops;
- use participative processes to reach decisions throughout, including those reached on some "normal" agenda items, and
- experience the value of explicit feedback.

The process used for the workshop, held off-site over two days, was that the whole group was given a series of short inputs by one of us. After each input, a task, for example definition of objectives for EI, was discussed in small groups. In the small groups, we acted as process consultants. In addition, during the two days, the top team shifted into its normal method of operation on several normal agenda items. Discussion on these items was managed by the Vice President, who used the processes which had been discussed before and during the workshop. At the end of each agenda item process, feedback was offered relating mainly to those issues covered during the workshop, rather than introducing additional, even though important, issues.

In terms of the work which we have done on different approaches to learning[1], it will perhaps not be surprising to hear that we asked all participants before the workshop to complete our Learning Styles Questionnaire. We analysed the results before the workshop, and adjusted the process to provide more structured inputs, because of the high level of Theorist preferences across the group as a whole. While we felt happy about the apparent response to the inputs we made and the proportion of time they took during the workshop, we were probably too ambitious in moving beyond the collection of data about learning and their use in the design of the workshop. Our attempt to provide a short session, for example, on the meaning of the data and the relevance of these issues in the longer term for management development, was not wholly successful.

Since we had agreed objectives for the workshop beforehand, it was relatively easy to assess its success. In fact, all the workshop objectives were met, with the exception of any real contribution to the design of next-level workshops. The design of the workshop was already ambitious because of its combination of processes centring on the core reality of management jobs. The point is made even more clear if we look at the difference between two of the things involved. When the workshop participants set objectives and designed plans for dealing with EI and PM, they were undertaking real management tasks required for the effective development of management in PDG. To do so with process consultant feedback in an off-the-job environment might still be seen by some as a relatively peripheral

managerial activity. For some participants, the experience might be felt to be that of developing useful skills and identifying useful plans, but not working on issues of fundamental gut importance. The decision also to use the opportunity to discuss real agenda items was much more risky because these were at the heart of normal managerial concern. When this top team had to decide, as it did, whether to allocate more time to a major discussion of a potential budget cut at the expense of workshop time on EI issues, issues about participative decision making became central for everyone.

One other feature about the managerial processes involved needs clarification. Although for the purposes of the workshop there was a distinction between "normal" agenda items and those being discussed under the "EI and PM" label, the workshop was designed to ensure that all these items became incorporated in the normal managerial life. This meant that decisions and the requirements for subsequent action arising during the workshop were all taken back and put on the agenda for subsequent meetings. This design feature was important, not only in terms of the principles we were trying to help managers to use, but also helped to avoid some of the reasons for failures to act on good intentions about participative management in the past.

Workshops at the Next Level

One of the decisions made at the top team workshop was that it had validated both the process and the credibility of ourselves for the next level of workshops, decision on which had been delayed at the completion of the diagnostic report review. This decision of principle was followed by a series of drafts and discussions between ourselves and the small group of Ford managers charged with sorting out the detail (from Industrial Relations and Employee Involvement). We had decided in terms of the likely numbers involved and the process we recommended that we should bring in a third colleague, Graham Robinson. The three of us formed in our view a successful working group because we shared a great deal in terms of past experience of programme management, of our belief in the virtue of working on specific behaviours and experience in giving feedback to senior managers.

Our Ford clients decided that in addition to the workshops which we would run geared specifically to behavioural skills requirements, they wanted to introduce managers to wider issues of Programme Management through seminars run by Professor Hopeman of Villanova University, Pennsylvania. The process of designing the two events so that they complemented each other was obviously vital, and this was managed through a full exchange of materials, of design objectives and by attendance by Peter at a Hopeman seminar which preceded our workshop. We have not included here detailed comments on the design of the Hopeman seminars, since they are clearly not our material to quote. The main feature of the Hopeman seminars was the exploration of what matrix management aimed to achieve and the kinds of issues involved in successfully managing in that way. Clearly the design of our subsequent workshop presumed that people had benefited from the Hopeman seminar and this proved to be the case.

As compared with the top team workshop, the subsequent workshops had an even more precise frame of reference. Whereas the top team workshop had

dealt with both EI and PM issues, the next level dealt solely with Programme Management. The reason for this was that, at the time the second-level workshops were being run, the major organisational changes involved in Programme Management had been announced and, indeed, from the earliest workshops onwards, were being implemented. A major focus of concern, both at top level and at the lower levels, was therefore on the practical issues arising from PM rather than on the combination of issues arising from both PM and EI. From the point of view of the design team, this sharpened focus of attention was entirely acceptable since it again emphasised that we were dealing with current real and concrete issues, which managers had to manage well, rather than perhaps equally desirable but vaguer issues of general management styles. In practical terms, too, we felt that the principles involved were the same, and that the behavioural skills were essentially the same under either heading. The focus on one particular aspect made it more likely that we could achieve something significant in two days, whereas a wider focus with the same time limitation might mean we achieved less.

The objectives and detailed design of the workshops were discussed with representatives of the top team. The objectives were that by the end of the workshops participants would have:

(1) identified the key behavioural skills for the successful implementation of PM and practised and developed them during the workshop;

(2) clarified their understanding of the different management approaches (directive, consultative, collaborative and delegative) and recognised the operational situations in which they should be used (*Note:* The change from the three definitions used with the top team was made to fit into a wider Ford environment),

(3) obtained an understanding of the characteristics of effective working groups and reviewed the effectiveness of their participation in a working group.

These objectives were sustained for all 14 of the workshops which we ran in the United Kingdom over a period of three months. (A German-speaking consultant subsequently ran workshops in Germany.)

The major design features of these workshops were again that they concentrated on the actuality of what these managers would be required to do, that they involved managers in working on the real tasks of defining Programme Management, with help from a process consultant. One important issue of principle decided beforehand was that we should deal with actual PM teams as far as possible, as compared with the alternative of mixing people across teams. Again, the decision which we strongly advocated was that this should be as far as possible an occasion of reality rather than simulation. Clearly the choice of real teams produced problems, both in terms of releasing all managers at once and also overcoming the view that working in real teams would be too risky and dangerous.

As with the top team workshop, the role of faculty (Peter, Alan and Graham) once the workshops were under way was to combine a series of short inputs which we shared between us (only 20 minutes and two inputs in total over the two days) with a process consultant role within the small groups. In addition, there was a further role for us. Part of our proposal to Ford before setting up these workshops

was that they should develop the resources to run such activities themselves. We therefore took on the task of helping three Ford managers from the Industrial Relations Department to learn how to run these sessions, and specifically how to give process feedback. From the point of view of IMCB, we had operated from the beginning with the commitment that we should involve the relevant Ford staff managers in a full understanding of what we were doing and how we were doing it from the diagnostic stage onwards. As a matter of principle, we think it right that a client should be enabled to take care of himself instead of having to rely in perpetuity on the outside experts who have carefully hidden some of the expertise away from the client.

The workshops were run off-site over two days, with no significant work during the intervening evening. The numbers attending the workshops ranged from 25-45 and the design of the programme deliberately provided for people to work in two different groups during the two days. This design feature was not to ensure, as is often the case, simply that people have an opportunity to mix with as many colleagues as possible. One of the characteristics of matrix management is that people have to operate in two different management groups, and have to convey views and represent issues from one group to another. Our design therefore used a two-stage task process and provided for participants to be placed in two groups to give them that experience.

Each workshop used a five stage approach for three major tasks. These stages were as follows:

(1) a short briefing session where the task was given, together with any introductory points and supporting documentation;
(2) a preparatory phase, typically lasting an hour or so, done in five groups (A B C D E) of five, six or seven members;
(3) a core phase done in three larger groups (X, Y, Z) with approximately equal representation from each of the preparatory groups;
(4) a process review phase, lasting 45 minutes, done separately in the core groups and facilitated by one of us, and
(5) a plenary session where each core group reported back on the results of the task and learnings from their process review.

This cycle of events was repeated for all three tasks which in summary were as follows:

Task One

In the light of your knowledge of, and experience to date with, Programme Management decide which ten behavioural skills are most important in helping ensure PM is a success in Product Development. (Each group was given a list of 25 skills and invited to use them as thought starters.)

Task Two

Identify experiences you have had in Product Development with each management approach (each group had been given precise definitions for the

Directive, Consultative, Collaborative and Delegative approaches) and, assuming that all four approaches are appropriate at some time, develop guidelines that managers in PD could use to decide when to adopt which approach.

Task Three

You are in competition with the other groups to produce the best 15-minute presentation on what actions you propose to take to create effective group working in Product Development after this workshop. (An additional "complication" in this task was that despite being in competition with one another, the groups had to co-operate in agreeing the criteria to be used to judge which presentation was best and the mechanics of how the adjudication was to be carried out.)

There was an important fourth task, designed to get individual and group commitment to action after the workshop.

Task Four

Think back over the whole workshop and the action plans that have resulted from each of the process reviews (the relevant flip charts are up on the wall in your group room). Decide what you, as an individual, are going to do to implement the lessons of the workshop when you get back to work.

This individual work cascaded into some group discussions on appropriate subsequent action which were announced and reviewed in the final plenary session.

During group discussions, the faculty member would make process interventions as he thought appropriate, but worked to the priority of allowing the group to manage itself or indeed not to manage itself. Process interventions were made by individual faculty members according to a briefing note agreed between us beforehand. Although each group would be different in its approach and in its problems in relation to particular tasks, we felt it necessary that faculty members would be working to a broadly agreed view about timing and intervention, even though these would be within differing situations within the group. In addition to making process interventions, faculty had an important role to play during the process reviews at the end of each task. These sessions were structured to the extent of following a laid down procedure.

The recommended procedure for reviewing was as follows:

(1) Compile (on flips) two lists
   — what went well
   — what could have gone better.
(2) Collect feedback from your observer and add any extra points to the two lists.
(3) React to the feedback by asking questions of clarification and/or for the observer's suggestions (resist the temptation to become defensive or to argue with the observer).
(4) Select from the list one or two issues to focus on.

(5) In the light of the selected issues, gather suggestions for action (from everyone, not just the observer).

(6) Plan actions so that everyone involved is clear what they have to do. Be prepared to experiment with different approaches rather than planning something safe and unremarkable.

These review sessions were a vital ingredient in the double value formula for the workshop besides being the main vehicles for learning from experience. Interestingly, the idea of conducting process reviews back at work, after significant meetings for example, featured in many of the action plans taken away at the end of each workshop.

Clearly, another significant aspect of the design from the point of view of the participants was the nature of the tasks they were set. It would have been relatively easy to invent some unreal tasks for the participants to undertake and to monitor and give feedback on their performance. We chose instead the "double value" formula which was to identify tasks real within the Programme Management context. We therefore designed the process so that their tasks were to identify the skills required in effective Programme Management, the different decision-making processes involved, and the issues of working effectively in groups. Identifying, clarifying and negotiating these amongst themselves would, we believed, ensure a greater level of understanding and commitment to the required skills than simply presenting them with a list of skills and then providing some simulated experience of working on them. It is not, for example, difficult to get intelligent managers to "accept" that effective listening is a skill required if you wish to get effective participation (and is clearly less required if your management process is authoritarian). It is, in our view, more helpful to cause people to work on what effective listening really means by involving them in a discussion in which they have to listen to other people describing what effective listening is.

It will be remembered that we are dealing mainly with real management teams and in each case a member of the top team responsible for that particular team was involved, first, in launching the workshop and, secondly, in participating in the final session in which specific action plans for that team were presented to, and often agreed with, him.

These final action planning sessions were both the most productive and the most risky parts of the workshop from some points of view. They could be seen as the most active, since they generated the most specific managerial actions for continuing after the workshop. Equally, however, they could be risky if they led to the identification of actions which were either in qualitative or quantitative terms too much for the team to tackle satisfactorily afterwards. In one or two cases, it was clear that the process generated more than the team and its leader could actually manage. This final task was amended during the course of these workshops in order to reduce the possibility of unacceptable stresses of this kind. It became instead a commitment to personal action and sharing of views on personal action across the groups, rather than an attempted total management action plan on Programme Management by each team.

Workshops within a Workshop

We have mentioned already our substantial commitment to developing the internal resource to be able to undertake these activities. The major processes we used for this were to require each Ford trainer to produce a personal learning plan before he became involved in the workshops. We used our Learning Styles Questionnaire in order to facilitate this. The trainers had all been involved in the design of the workshops and indeed had significantly contributed to the design. During the early workshops, they sat in with us during the input sessions and more significantly during the group sessions. The first step was for them to observe us in action, using our own checklists and guidance notes subsequently to discuss with us the interventions we had made, the strategy we had adopted, things they would have done if they had been responsible for the feedback. The next step was to take over responsibility for one of the small group process reviews during the two days and to receive feedback from a faculty member in the group on their performance. The final stage was to take full responsibility for feedback during the whole of a workshop, again under the wing of one of us. Then the judgement was made on when they could fly on their own and take up a full position as a process consultant, without the presence of one of the experienced faculty. The trainers had experience of working with each of the experienced members of faculty before being launched on their own.

There were some differences in the speed with which they were able to take up some of the more difficult issues, but eventually all three received our approval to take up a full role. The final judgement on this was very important to us, since we thought we had a responsibility to three parties. First, we had to be clear that line managers would receive effective help from the individual concerned. Second, we did not want to place the individual trainer in a position which he could not manage well. Finally we had a concern to sustain the quality of a workshop in which we had invested a great deal of our own intellectual and emotional equity.

Conclusion

This article deals with only part of the major change project undertaken by Ford of Europe PDG. Much more was happening day by day within the organisation at the time to energise and support the objectives and processes described here. More has happened since, with the off-the-job development of process consultancy skills in a further workshop, a workshop specifically for trade union representatives and a process consultancy role with joint management-union working groups.

Our intention in describing this part of a complex whole was to give further evidence on the opportunity to change the boundaries[2] between "real management development" on the job, and "unreal management development" off the job. This kind of work on real management issues is the core of IMCB's approach to management development. We proposed, and our clients in Ford had the courage to accept, a much more real form of management training. We are not suggesting that this particular process is always suitable even for change events with similar objectives. We have, however, tried to show reality can be used as the major theme — in the right circumstances and with the right managers involved.

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An Action Learning Approach to Performance Review and Development

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Introduction

This is an account of how the London Borough of Bromley introduced an approach to Management Development based around a performance appraisal mechanism (which they call Performance Review) from autumn 1985 to spring 1986. The need for an improvement in management methods and approaches was inspired by a strong and imaginative paper on "survival management style" published by the Chief Executive in June 1985. This was a time when local government in Britain was thinking very seriously about its right to continue doing what it had traditionally regarded as its own. However, the strong guidelines contained in the Chief Executive's paper were not in themselves capable of getting a common approach to better management started on its own. It needed much more in the way of structure and order, and this is what the management development programme set out to provide.

The scheme itself is not especially new. It is an MBO type appraisal system based on agreed objectives and uses minimal paperwork and no scoring or box ticking systems. What is more interesting is the manner in which they designed the method and the manner in which they introduced it to the organisation. Especially important is the role of a group of senior managers called the Management Development Officers. This group having met to consider all the possibilities was responsible for the design and eventual implementation; in this way, the scheme was not seen as something handed over by consultants or forced into the organisation by the personnel department. It was created by practising managers and it was promoted and pushed by them despite the usual protests and objections. In this sense it is an example of action learning in practice.

This is an important issue in this article since the International Management Centre from Buckingham, IMCB, which helped the London Borough of Bromley in this exercise, is a business school totally committed to helping managers develop themselves through considering new ways of tackling management problems in reality and putting the solutions into action.

The London Borough of Bromley in 1985

To understand most usefully what happened in Bromley, you have to take some account of the borough itself and why 1985/86 is especially important in local government in London. Bromley, on the south east edge of London, is one of the

largest of the 33 boroughs making up Greater London with a population of 300,000. The borough is part urban and part rural, running from Lewisham in South East London right out to the Kent countryside and it is traditionally a strongly conservative borough. The organisation structure of the borough is quite commonly found in local government and the work is divided between a number of Chief Officers responsible for:

Finance;
Technical Services;
Housing;
Recreation;
Education;
Environmental Health;
Social Services, and
Libraries.

Additionally two departments are concerned with internal services:

Chief Executives, and
Manpower Services.

This organisation structure is important when you think about management development as there is almost no tradition of moving from one department to another for development reasons. Each department depends on, and fosters, the particular professional and technical training and expertise which is appropriate to its service. Although there are obvious interdependencies between departments, there are almost no multi-department working groups except at the level of senior management, i.e. Chief Officers. Nearly all the money Bromley spends on training is spent on professional training.

The other important piece of background to this exercise is the date. During the Thatcher Conservative administration, which was elected in 1979, there has been a very close scrutiny of local government operations and especially their spending policies. It has been a period when traditional central government support for local activities has been rationalised and cut back. Additionally, this Government succeeded in closing down the major metropolitan authorities including the Greater London Council in April 1986.

Although these closures had a direct impact in all Greater London administration, there was another psychological impact on boroughs like Bromley. Things were going to change and would never be the same again. What was not so clear was exactly what the change would need to be. It was also apparent that in moving away from the old order to a new one, there would be an enormous variation in individual expectations and interpretations, which, on one hand, would be very exciting and, on the other, worrying. In one of the early discussions with the Management Development Officers' group, we asked the question "Why try and get better managers anyway?" and their answer was "To survive".

Finally, and importantly, there was one other external factor present at the time of this work which had an impact and that was the use of the word "appraisal" itself. For some time the Department of Education had been talking of the need

to "appraise" teachers' performance in schools and teachers and their unions had let it be clearly known that they were not prepared to be scrutinised in this way. The whole case was clumsily presented by the Government, and probably the teaching side over-reacted, but it is a crucial factor to be considered in the total approach to introducing better and more effective management in a local authority such as Bromley. It was for this reason that although the word appraisal was extensively used in informal communications, when it came to formalising the scheme, the preferred words were Management Development Review Scheme.

It is possible that some reader who is looking to this article to improve his/her understanding of the performance appraisal process may have been irritated by the early emphasis on the "political background" which influenced the Borough of Bromley. However, there are too many histories of management development programmes and performance appraisal programmes which have failed, not because they were badly designed in training terms, but because the implementers failed to take account of these important influences. In every aspect of the Bromley programme, the emphasis was on "how do we get it in and started—and then we can refine it and improve it". Doing just this meant taking account of all shades of internal and external politics, but the eventual smooth start-up reflects the time and effort spent in this area.

The Chief Executive's Paper on Management Style

Against this background, the Chief Executive published a discussion paper for all the managers in the borough called "The Council's Management Style". The future needs are indicated in an appendix to the paper and we reproduce it here in full. He writes:

> The management style described in the right hand column is a far cry from the one in which the council's longer serving officers grew up. However, it is only by providing an atmosphere which encourages the development of these features that managers will be able to motivate and be motivated. Commitment and motivation will be most enhanced by changes which facilitate the last listed item "maximum freedom to managers to manage".

The problem now remained to turn the Chief Executive's statement into reality. A number of meetings of a working party resulted in Bromley inviting IMCB to help them in designing a performance appraisal system which would lead towards the kind of management improvement that they were seeking. In the initial meeting that established the pattern of the project, a crucial statement was made several times which described precisely the purpose of the appraisal process: *It was to be used exclusively for assisting the process of improving the way managers managed and not for any other purpose.*

There are other reasons why you might wish to go down the review path other than management development; these include:

- identifying potential;
- a basis for career counselling;
- salary decision making, and
- succession and resource planning.

Feature	Past (Say 1960-1975)	Present (Say 1976-1990)
Era	Rising expectations	Limited resources
Strategies	Allowable growth	Real cuts
	Big is best	Small is best
	Economies of scale	Economy through managers who have recognised responsibility for activities, budgets, etc.
Structures	Fragmented	Central corporate direction
	Service/ Committee based	Delegated management
Key systems	Allocation of additional resources	Strategic planning to adapt and take advantage of demographic shifts
	Detailed bureaucratic and universal controls, particularly of inputs	Concentration on control of outputs in broad terms
	Financial control in "real terms" (i e inflation costs accepted at cost)	Cash planning (i e if inflation exceeds expectations, activities are cut)
Key skills	Professional Administrative	Managerial Political (small p)
Style	Bureaucratic	Experimental
	Safe (i e documentary cover for action "Yes Minister" levels of protection)	Innovative· participative (i e selective in the use of resources and therefore involving risk taking)
Staff	Heavy at the centre	Lean at the centre (or should be)
	Limited use of technology	Intensive use of technology
	Limited freedom to managers to manage	Maximum freedom to managers to manage

Table I.
London Borough of Bromley Management Approaches—Past and Present

The following timetable was drawn up for the implementation:

- appoint a working party of senior managers to be called Management Development Officers (MDOs);
- work with the MDOs to design the mechanics and rules of the Review Scheme;
- MDOs to present this scheme to the committee of Chief Officers;
- MDOs to brief their departmental staff on the implications and intentions of the scheme;
- training sessions designed by the MDO group to be run for all "interviewing officers", and
- start-up.

Composition and Role of the MDO Group

In general, the MDO group was made up of senior officers who were either the number two in their department or at least they reported to the Chief Officer.

The MDO group therefore is in total control of the whole process, although there were occasional times when they needed guidance. The rest of this article shows the processes used by this group in working through these stages. We need to state again that the Management Development Officers were not personnel managers or human resource specialists, but practising line managers with their own specialist functions and all regarded as senior in their department. Indeed, the MDO group is in many ways the most interesting feature of the London Borough of Bromley's approach to management development.

MDO Workshop

The MDO group spent three days working with the facilitator in an intense and practical way. The purpose of this meeting was not just to learn something about appraisal or management development but to equip, and motivate them, to create and design their own method of getting better managers in Bromley. At the end of the first day, there was a strong feeling of frustration and resentment among themselves and towards the outsider. They were unclear about their role and the purpose of being MDOs. However, this frustration and their own sense of commitment to better management in Bromley forced them to clarify their own issues, and eventually, at the end of the three days, to produce exactly what they needed.

At the beginning, they were not a group, they were fragmented in their experience, and they were not sure of the role they were expected to play. Nor for that matter was anyone else, and once they realised it was in their hands to grab the role and make it workable, things began to happen.

At the end, they were cohesive, resolute and clear. The facilitator's role is worth looking at. At the beginning, he worked hard making the group think through their purpose; then he joined them and became one of the group, sharing his experience with them. Then, at the end, he left them and they got on with the business of making management development work.

The MDO group spent three days working together on the following issues:

- How do managers learn about managing?
- How do you develop better managers?
- What is the link between management development and appraisal?
- What is the best form of appraisal for us?
- What is the role of the Management Development Officer?
- What kind of training will we all need?

Finally, they designed and rehearsed their presentation to the Chief Officer Group, explaining the objectives and rules for the Management Development Review Scheme.

How do Managers Learn?

The MDO group examined their own different approaches to learning using the Learning Styles Questionnaire developed by Honey and Mumford. This looks at

four types of ways in which managers have been observed in coping best with their learning.

- Pragmatist style—needs tips and clues—"try this—it works".
- Theorist style—needs models and systems; not prepared to try new things until these have been established.
- Reflector style—learns by being given space and time to learn and generalise from specific experiences.
- Activist style—learns by trying things out; being the leader, the fall guy.

The MDO group assessed their own style and realised that effective management learning opportunities vary in their effectiveness from person to person depending on their own particular learning style.

How do you Develop Better Managers?

The MDO group began by making an important assumption which was that, until it was proved otherwise there was sufficient management potential within the current Bromley staff as long as it could be properly tapped and utilised. As the management development programme took off, it might become evident that this was not the case, but, until there was some sort of evidence, it had to be the place to start. They considered the ways in which people could learn to manage better and their findings are described in Figure 1.

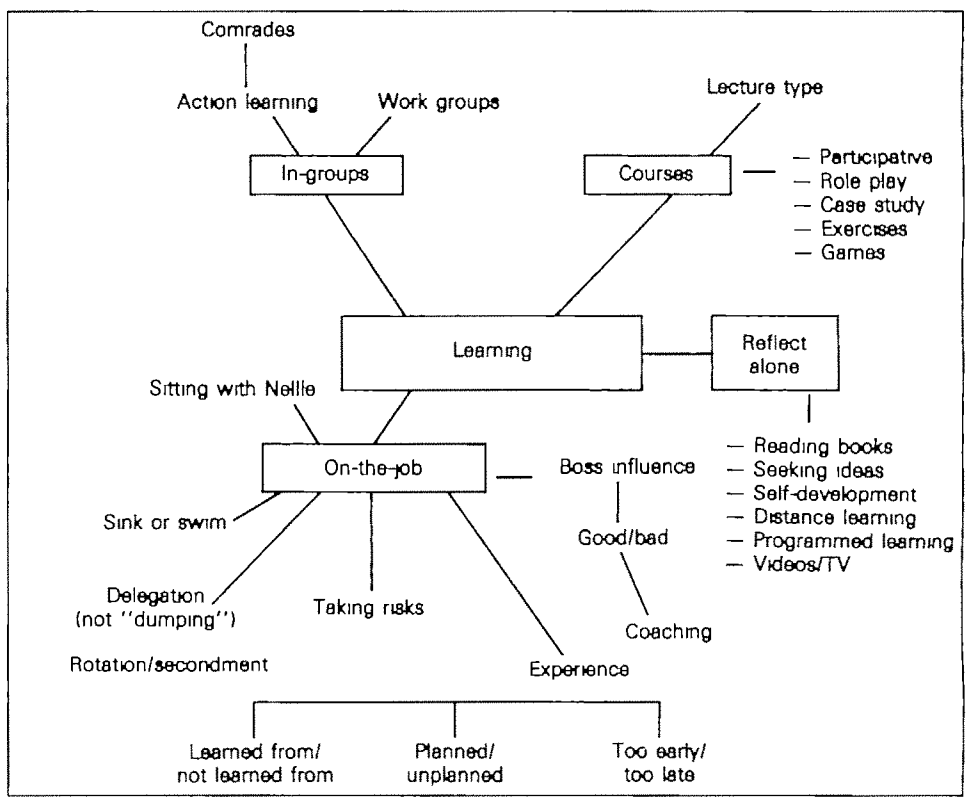


Figure 1.
Methods Available for Helping People to Manage Better

They admitted that most people in the borough probably did not think of these methods and that there was a tendency to think in terms of "courses". This is, after all, the way of training in professional skills which is the way most people have regarded training up to now. They realised that one of their key roles as MDOs was to assist managers who had under-performing subordinate managers, to find the most appropriate learning approach for that individual. They also realised that some of these learning methods such as secondments and rotation, would cross traditional professional enclaves and that, although they would give support and encouragement to this, it meant a departure from a traditional understanding of the organisation as a set of parallel but separate services.

The MDOs found this discussion on learning and individual needs useful. They realised that a lot of good and bad management experience and expertise had already been acquired in the borough, but too little attention had been given to examining why certain experiences seemed to produce good managers and others did not. We heard of an example where four managers had been given, in an emergency, management responsibility earlier than usual and that "luckily they all made it". However, no one was aware of what they had learned to do and what they had learned to avoid; nor did anyone know the things they learned from best. In other words, without courses or any other external events, these managers had learned to manage better, but no one knew how or why. They had had experiences, but they had not consciously evaluated them and examined what they had learned. Although they were a small group of managers working together, they had missed the opportunity of deliberately comparing and sharing their experiences about management.

They also realised the importance not so much of experience but rather of "planned" experiences followed by some debriefing to find out what had been learned and how.

This example is important because it points to the link between appraisal, which is a systematic opportunity to think about learning to manage better, and the notion of management development which is a process of providing better management for the organisation.

The Link between Management Development and Appraisal

There was a tendency and a danger to use these phrases as meaning the same thing, and we needed a simple model or description to show how they differed and still fitted together. During the MDO discussions, we found the following model helpful.

Imagine that the short vertical line on the left of Figure 2 is an indicator of your management strengths now and that you would like to enlarge it, or grow it, so that it becomes the longer vertical line on the right. This process is the process of management development and to do it you will use all the possibilities of helping people to learn that seem appropriate to particular individuals. So you may use a combination of, say, some planned experiences, some courses, some group inter-disciplinary work, etc. In most organisations, these kinds of things are going on all the time, except it is usually happening in a rather haphazard way. The purpose of the appraisal process is to MOVE the process systematically from the left side

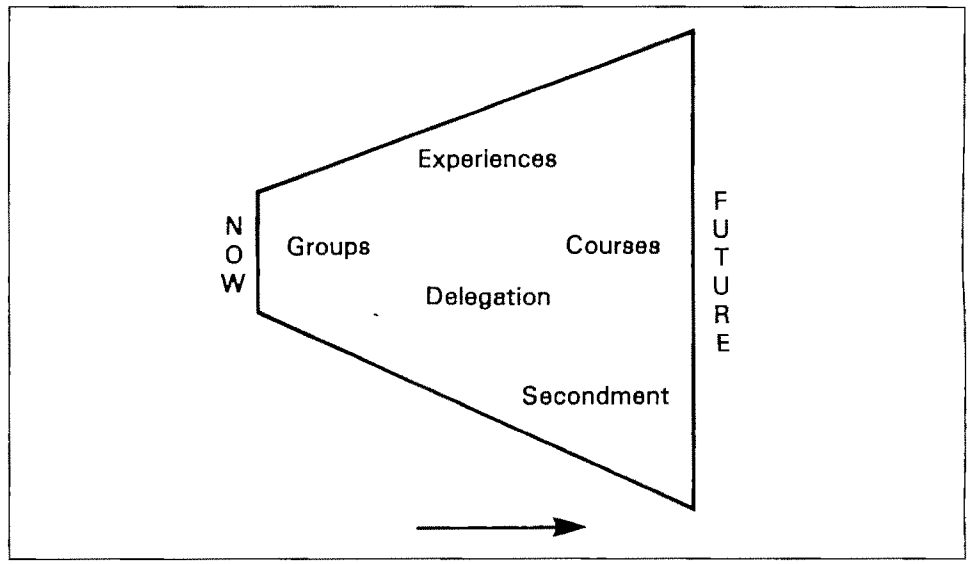


Figure 2.
A Model Showing the "Ingredients" of Management Development

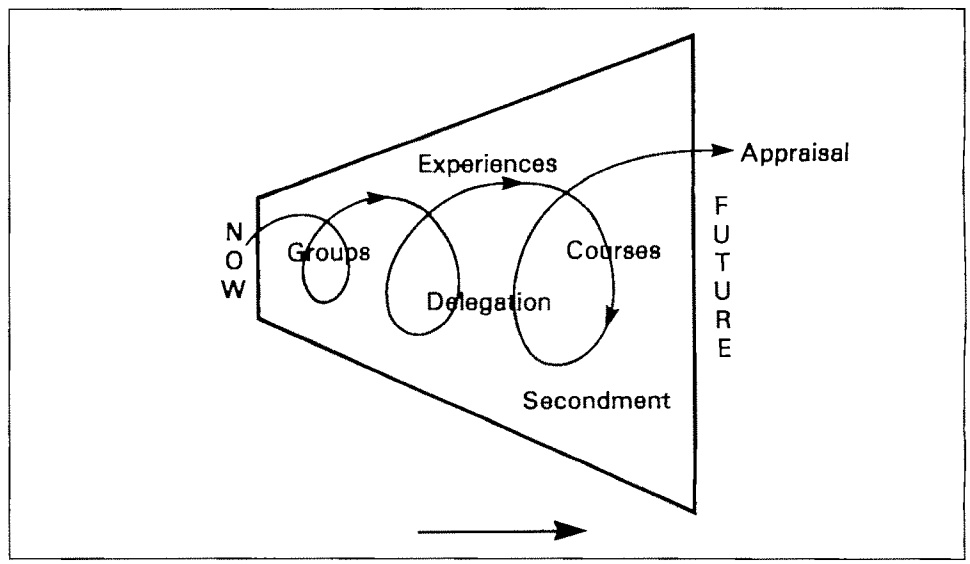


Figure 3.
A Model Showing the "Ingredients" of Management Development with Appraisal Driving it Forward

to the right side. The MDO group described this process as a screw moving through the series of unrelated events pulling them together (see Figure 3). The appraisal is not the same as the management development process, but is the driving force that sucks everyone in, establishes order and time scales, co-ordinates results so that successes can be shared and gives the opportunities for managers to work together in planning learning experiences.

The Driving Force Model

It is just possible that you could find a whole organisation moving in a coherent way without some kind of system, but it is most unlikely. This is the main reason

why the Chief Executive's paper on management style, which basically defines the "right-hand side" position, will not achieve anything just on its own. It lacks the momentum and the driving force which the appraisal system provides.

What is the Best Form of Appraisal for Us?

The MDO group considered a range of approaches to appraisal before selecting one based on known objectives set mutually by the boss and the subordinate manager. The objectives have to concern themselves with issues of better management and the purpose of the appraisal meeting is to:

- consider what ought to have happened;
- examine what really happened and see what has been learned about managing, and
- decide what to do next.

It looks deceptively simple, but in most organisations, and Bromley was no exception, it seldom takes place.

We are not going to discuss the criteria for setting good objectives here, except to make one observation. After looking at a series of types of objectives, the MDO group realised that an effective objective needs three stages:

(1) To identify a suitable area for improvement (e.g. improve the service of my department).

(2) To describe this in objective terms which are unambiguous and measurable (e.g. within six months to have reduced the time it takes to come up with what the client needs from two weeks to one week).

(3) To turn the activity associated with the objective into a precise working plan (e.g. six weeks assess the reasons for current delay, four weeks design system for reducing turnaround, discuss with staff, eight weeks for trial, assess effectiveness).

The advantage of this sort of approach is that it is flexible and can be used for all managers and all managerial problems.

The appraisal meeting considers what the manager intended, or needed, to do, and then, in a mutual way, discusses how successful he/she has been and what has been learned from the experience. It is important to realise that both successful and unsuccessful plans produce experiences that can provide learning opportunities. There is a tendency not to derive enough value from successful managerial experiences. It is apparent that before you can hold an appraisal meeting to compare what happened against what you hoped would happen, you have to call a start-up meeting. This states the first set of objectives which are inevitably a bit rough and ready when you have little in the way of formal management intentions to guide you.

What emerges from the appraisal meeting depends on the manager and that manager's stage of development and their particular needs. The interviewing managers need to be encouraged to consider the widest possible range of learning opportunities available to the person concerned. The whole range of possibilities should be considered.

What is the Role of the Management Development Officer?

The MDO group realised that in no way did they replace the interviewing managers (although they were "interviewing managers" themselves). Nor were they replacing the Chief Officer of their department as the person responsible for the development of all employees in that department. Their main role was to make sure that all the possibilities for learning about management in Bromley as a totality were being used. If some manager had a problem with a subordinate manager and was unsure about how to handle it, while another manager had had some success with this kind of problem and had found an effective learning solution, this information could be passed around via the MDO network. Similarly, if there seemed to be a number of managers with related difficulties, the MDO group could co-ordinate a solution on a group basis such as a course, for instance. The MDO group also is in a better position to understand the full range of learning possibilities in Bromley since they had spent considerable time discussing all the potential approaches. This again puts them in a strong advisory position. The question was raised several times during MDO meetings and training courses about confidentiality. If the MDO group was going to be some kind of advisory network, was there a danger of private comments and opinions "leaking" out. It was admitted that this was possible but the MDO group was aware of it.

However, the MDO group has one other important role to play in Bromley. In their own words, they regard themselves as the guardians of the appraisal system and the driving force behind the management development effort. At one stage in the training programmes, which were run for all interviewing managers (including MDOs and Chief Officers), each participant was asked to "declare" where he/she stood on the issue of performance appraisal in terms of their support. On a scale of cool, warm or hot, most participants declared themselves warm. (There were some cool and some hot.) The MDO participants declared themselves *red hot*! This is the key issue with this group. Because they have been involved since the beginning and because they have been the owners and the designers, they intend this scheme to work. To this extent, they will influence each other, their bosses, their colleagues and their subordinates.

Implementation

The MDO group made their presentation to the Chief Executive group and their scheme was accepted. They then briefed their respective departments prior to the one-day training courses. The courses themselves, for each interviewing officer, covered three main issues:

- Why have the scheme anyway?
- How to see the review process as learning about management.
- Preparing and practising for the interview.

Clearly one day is short for this programme but we followed the philosophy of getting started and then getting it right. There were some objectors. There were worries that the scheme might have ulterior motives. There were worries that not everyone would "play the game". This worry was greatly lessened when it was learned that Chief Officers were not only going through the same training

programme, but intended to carry out the first round of interviews within a very few weeks. However, the broad results were positive and managers welcomed the scheme.

At the time of writing this article, the first interviews are being carried out and are going according to schedule. It will be interesting to write a further article which examines what is being learned and where it is leading. Certainly we cannot claim that the mere existence of the review mechanisms and procedures will create better managers on their own; but without them there would be no dynamic, no screw, drawing them from the current state of managing to where they intend to be.

Conclusion

The important aspect about this approach in the London Borough of Bromley is not the training technique or methodology. Objective-based appraisal is well enough known. What is most interesting is the existence of a statement about what better management involves from the Chief Executive; a strongly committed group of senior managers charged with making it work who have done the design and planning and who have specified the steps along the way; and a strong commitment to getting it started and to keep learning from it as they go along. The most significant change in Bromley is the realisation that learning is not something that resides in the estates of the teachers and the professors, but lies in the hands of all managers if they decide to do something positive with it.

The MDO group and its activities and successes is the most interesting result to come out of this project so far. This was the Borough of Bromley's idea, and it is because the group not only decided the general shape of what was needed, but designed it in detail themselves and sold it to the Chief Officers, that it has a good chance of a real success. Action learning is all about equipping people with the necessary skill and confidence to solve their own problems in their own way.

The Problems of Developing Managers in the Small Firm

by
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Introduction

This article was written to record the perceptions of a set adviser after working through an action learning programme. There is no reason to see these views as being definitive, and the closing section recording the views of the sponsor, some clients and some participants is not assumed to have any relationship with the views expressed in the main body of the article. If action learning is to live up to its own principles, everyone associated with a programme will have different perceptions and will have learned differently. This is an attempt to explore the learning of one set adviser during a programme.

"Through a Glass Darkly"

One of the most devastating medical conditions must be that of the child whose skin does not grow with the rest of his frame and who can only survive by means of a series of complicated and painful operations. In many ways, the condition and its treatment (drastic and painful surgery) can be likened to that of the successful small firm — the growth of which rapidly outstrips the growth of its management.

The typical small firm starts from a management team of one or two — the founder father and, possibly, a partner — often a member of his/her own family. The firm can usually progress successfully to the stage of having two or three departmental managers (typically production, sales and accounts), each controlling a small staff and directly controlled by the chief executive who frequently still heads a function — usually sales or technical. Up to this stage, if people "know their jobs" and can exercise basic supervisory skills, the entrepreneurial flair of the founder provides all of the management that is needed. Products may be technically sophisticated (electronic switchgear, computer software or insurance) but systems are simple, administration is limited, co-ordination and communication can be face to face and by word of mouth, control can be by the 18 inch rule — the distance between a pat on the back and a kick up the backside.

Further success brings further complications, and management has to grow in all dimensions — more activity, more people, more managers, both vertically and horizontally and, before long, a management which has to take full responsibility for running the firm below the policy level. The systems which link the firm with its customers and suppliers, and link functions within the firm become more complex and need an administrative activity to make these systems work. Control becomes an exercise in cybernetics, with systems relating to each other, feedback loops and input and output systems. Management has to work as a team and, in addition to increased personal skills, managers have to learn the skills of teamwork.

As well as the problems of a changed structure and the acquisition of new skills, growth also brings two problems with which individuals have even more difficulty in coping. The first is the introduction of new personnel — often over the heads of the managers who have seen the firm through the hard and hungry years. Second, there is a reduction, even a redundancy, in the skills which have, in the past, been invaluable. These skills, typical of the very small firm, range from being able to drive a wagon or mend a machine to holding in one man's head the complete warehouse inventory or the sales ledger. About this time, also, much of the fun seems to go out of work. Mistakes that could be tolerated when they affected one customer are not acceptable when they affect 20; a supply crisis which meant the whole firm (all seven of them) working all night in a spirit of camaraderie now leads to talk of an extra shift or subcontracting work out; a shift in fashion which did not matter when we had 0.3 per cent of the market can be a disaster when we have 30 per cent, now that the boss can no longer make up the deficiency by finding another outlet or working on the personal relationship with one customer. Waiting for wages until Snudge and Tagel pay up can be lived with — a cash flow problem is another matter altogether. Unless we all get more systematic, serious-minded and free from error, calamity is round the corner.

To compound the difficulties, these problems do not manifest themselves in a series of radically changed and manifestly different situations. They sneak up on you. At first, new systems can be extemporised; the way of dealing with the first export customer can be held in the sales manager's head; a bracket from a 1976 Ford Cortina solves a customer's design problem; a word-of-mouth agreement with a supplier avoids a cash-flow problem. If trends are not spotted in time, we suddenly have 25 export customers in six different countries, all with different documentation needs; there are 120 production modifications, all in a notebook in the works manager's hip pocket; our friendly supplier has been taken over by a multinational, demanding 12-month contracts with no cancellation clauses and payments in 28 days — or else.

Somewhere along the line from a comfortable existence to triumph or disaster, it occurs to the founder that changes have to be made in the way in which the firm is managed. He (or she) is faced with two conflicting philosophies. Either he keeps faith with the existing management team and strengthens it by supplementing it and developing the skills of the originals, or he scraps the existing team by dismissals and replacements with newcomers. Each approach presents its own problems. He is between the Scylla of the Peter Principle (each manager finding the level of his or her own incompetence and producing negative results) or the Charybdis of throwing out the baby of detailed knowledge and personal loyalty with the bath water of ineffectiveness. There is also the problem (which Sir Clive Sinclair never seemed to solve) of what to do with him or herself.

A Working Example

MCB University Press was a firm which, under the leadership of a team of academics/entrepreneurs, had experienced rapid growth and had by 1984 reached the position of a leading publisher of management journals in Europe, with 27 titles appearing regularly. The growth in journal publication had been coped with

by using external editors, tapping a seemingly inexhaustible market for management journals and subcontracting most of the production. Around 1984, with no cessation in the journal activity, there came a demand for an increased product range — books and courseware for the courses to be run by MCB's sister organisation, IMCB, The International Management Centre from Buckingham. The new products called for new production methods and at least three different tempi in the firm, from "Time is important, but it must be right" in books, through "Try to get in three or four issues per year" for journals, to "We need it tomorrow — preferably by 9 am" for courseware.

The senior management team of MCB-UP recognised the incipient problem and decided on a three-fold strategy:

(1) withdraw the founder fathers from all involvement in day-to-day management;

(2) supplement the existing team in areas where new skills were needed, e.g. accounting, computing, and

(3) develop the team to enable them to accept new methods, skills and responsibilities.

Because IMCB had committed itself to action learning as the cornerstone of its management training programmes, it was inevitable that action learning would be the vehicle for the MCB-UP Management Development Programme. The entire management team of MCB-UP below the Managing Director was brought into the programme, plus the Academic Administrator for the IMCB programmes who worked in the suite of offices in Bradford, Yorkshire, in which MCB-UP was housed. None of the management team had large staffs and one or two held posts which had definite managerial responsibilities but did not involve control of staff. Because all of the participants on the programme were located in Bradford, it was agreed that apart from the opening and closing events, all meetings would be held in Bradford.

The Action Learning Programme — Design

The programme had several interesting features:

(1) An entire management team was involved.

(2) In the group, experience in being trained for management ranged from an MBA to nil.

(3) Projects were all to be "own job, own location", but designed to stretch the participants by exploring new technology, new methods or new spheres of work.

(4) The clients (the managers who "owned" the problems and had an interest in having them solved) were all directors of MCB-UP, although each participant's client was not necessarily his or her boss.

The objectives of the programme were not fully spelt out by the directors to the set adviser but were perceived to be:

(1) the creation of a management team which could run MCB-UP with the minimum interference;

(2) an opportunity to appraise the individuals in the team, and

(3) a desire to taste their own action learning medicine.

Brief contact with the participants before the programme began suggested that their reaction was a compound of passive resistance, active hostility and fear — the latter mainly directed at the realisation that the programme would end with a series of individual presentations to the clients who not only had the authority of directors, but also the cachet of academic excellence — they included four professors, three of them with doctorates.

The programme was run on very pure action learning lines. The only knowledge and skills inputs were those asked for by the participants; projects were chosen and designed in detail by the participants from a list of "problems requiring solution" put forward by the clients. Sets met regularly with the minimum intervention from the set adviser. In retrospect, this set adviser stance may have been a mistake, arising from a perception of participants' attitudes as shown at the opening weekend. At this event,the group gave evidence of being very open and out-going, each individual making a considerable contribution. They subsequently clammed up to some extent and would possibly have benefited from more overt encouragement, pushing or guidance. This dilemma opens up the old set adviser question of problem solution vs.personal development. On the one hand, an unsuccessful project can reflect on the participant, the programme and the totality of action learning, even if it has presented a host of learning opportunities. On the other hand, too much help can reduce the learning available.

In this case, the set adviser's view was that most of the participants were too well aware of their limitations and needed to be left to discover their competences by doing and, eventually, achieving, with the minimum of help other than any which they had gained from their set colleagues. One dramatic breakthrough which justified the set adviser's approach was the case of DT who, having spent several meetings professing her technological ignorance, confounded us all (not least herself) by a presentation to the set detailing the pros and cons of a range of technically complex production methods.

The Action Learning Programme — Operation

The opening event was staged over two days at a hotel at Knutsford and was intended to be an intensive but relaxed period exploring the possibilities of the programme, selecting projects and sets (at this stage two sets were envisaged) and getting to know something about each other and the set adviser. The results were a revelation of the fears (mainly centred on the final presentation, even at this stage); hostility arising from a suspicion that the group was being manipulated by senior management and, in most cases, doubts about the value of a training programme which, far from having expert inputs, depended for its success on the acknowledged inexpert contributions of the participants.

The two days were concluded successfully, partly because of interest in the self and organisation analyses which had been undertaken, but mainly because of the obvious value of the projects which were to be undertaken, some commitment to the projects because they were self-chosen, and loyalty to the job and the firm (in that order). A certain amount of team identity had been established, but the

reservations of at least three of the participants were revealed. One had doubts because he could not see the learning opportunities in such an unstructured and "laid-back" approach. The other two, who were extremely intellectually competent, were suspicious of the motives of senior management and saw future events as being a threat to the exercise of their personal professional expertise and their freedom to operate in their own chosen ways. Most of the group saw their own projects as valuable and interesting, and were prepared to accept senior management's commitment to the programme, if only because it was costing money.

During the two days and subsequently in their own time, each participant selected a project and wrote a short document explaining his/her objectives and the way in which it was intended to approach the problem. These documents were then submitted to senior management for approval. Senior management's next move nearly consigned the programme to oblivion. They came down heavily on the side of value for money from the projects and, using their wider knowledge of the commercial situation and their own experience and expertise as managers, they radically altered many of the project proposals. As a result, one project was seen as having had its core taken out, two or three as being bent to fit already existing plans and one as being reduced to being the job the participant was already doing. The next set meeting rang with cries of "Betrayal" and "Manipulation" thinly disguised as "Why do I need to tell them what they already know?" "What is the point of doing that?" and "We can't do all that in the time they have given us."

By blandly acting as though nothing was the matter, the set adviser got through a couple of set meetings with very little contribution, other than that forced by introducing two Critical Incident Analyses which were contributed by members of the set under duress.

Gradually the interest of the projects and the West Yorkshire work ethic got most of the group to work, encouraged by the example of the least assertive member of the group, who produced a vast amount of detailed work over a short period; at the same time making use of her project work in her daily work of planning production.

The Use of Set Meetings — Formal and Informal

It should be explained that, after very few set meetings, the groups decided to meet as one set rather than two. The decision was made because of the disparity between the sets. At the set selection session at Knutsford, all of the more extrovert members had opted for the same set, leaving the second set as an essentially contemplative body. Various meetings of different numbers and duration were taking part outside the formal set meetings and this, coupled with the difference in approach between the two sets, led the group to feel that they would be better in one set. The decision proved also to be advantageous for purely logistic reasons. With the onset of the holiday period and increasing work pressures, members were absent on occasions and the two who saw the programme as personally threatening gradually opted out of the programme and, eventually, out of the company. Any attempt to operate as two sets would have resulted in non-viable numbers on occasions.

Out-of-set meetings with no set adviser present were a feature of this programme and had been expected because of the close proximity of the participants in their day-to-day work and the interrelated nature of most of their jobs. What the long-term effect of the programme will be cannot be known but, in the short term, the comment was made that people were working together more comfortably than in the past and the newcomers to the firm certainly benefited. Working patterns differed; there were one or two loners, some pairing and (because of his technical expertise) AC tended to become involved in nearly everyone else's project and, at one stage, seemed to be doing his own project plus about 20 per cent of three or four others.

By the time the group were a third of the way through the programme, three main areas of doubt were revealed:

(1) In three cases there was a concern about being able to master the technical content of the project.

(2) There was a fairly general feeling that too much was being asked in the time available — a feeling arising in the set adviser's opinion:
   — because of late starting on the project work;
   — because of lingering resentment at the changes in projects made by senior management, and
   — in one or two cases because of resentment of criticisms made by clients at meetings between clients and participants.

(3) With two or three exceptions, renewed terror (not too strong a word) at the prospect of the final presentation.

Inputs

During the middle third of the programme came the only formal inputs to the programme. The McCann/Margerison TMI Programme was trailed in front of the group and picked up because it was seen to be interesting, prestigious and probably of value in the future. The set adviser ran a management of time session, which was partly a placebo to counteract the "short of time" syndrome but which would also be of future value. Joanna Kozubska ran two much appreciated sessions on presentation skills; with the dual objectives of preparing people to be representatives at a Harrogate Conference and making them ready for the project presentations. Towards the end of the programme and near the time for the project presentations (which remained a Damoclean threat to the very end), the set adviser gave some hints on presentation during two set meetings set aside for rehearsal of group and personal presentations.

Set meetings gradually became dynamic whilst never being as lively as they have been in other groups. This was probably because the participants were meeting almost daily in their ordinary work, so that merely meeting was not in itself an event and also because of the project working meetings which were taking place and were mentioned above. The two who dropped out, probably because, not being committed, they did not see themselves as being threatened, were the liveliest members in the earlier sets and one of them produced the only recognisably T-group type happening when she caused another set member to storm out in a mixture of fury and frustration.

The work of the clients was never, of course, observed directly by the set adviser, but comments made in the set meetings suggest that the roles taken up were occasionally those of academic tutors with students. In the main, clients adopted a boss role and there were several solid "put downs" which, whether justified or not, provided opportunities for learning for the participants.

Work on the projects raised no particular problems. There were the usual abortive visits, time wasted following dead-ends, and discoveries that, however badly things were done at MCB, other places were often as bad or worse. It was often heartening to discover that just because someone was professionally qualified, ran a big department or worked for a highly prestigious firm, he/she was not necessarily more competent than an unqualified person in MCB with a staff of two.

Presentation posed a problem to the end and the set adviser was under continual pressure to amend the format and make it as relaxed and informal as possible. In the upshot, the presentations were made in a small, luxurious hotel in the Lake District which MCB took over for a weekend. A group presentation was made on the benefits of the programme and the individual and group learning which had accrued. The set adviser was not present at this meeting and is still unaware of the content. The individual presentations were made in a traditional manner to a large group. Needless to say, despite eight months of collywobbles, they were highly competent and, in some cases, extremely good.

The set adviser was wined and dined excellently, paid his fee and sent on his way with a few kind words. For him it was an interesting and enjoyable experience with a lot of personal satisfaction and a lot of personal learning. What is much more important is what the participants and the firm got out of the programme. To what extent was the team-building a success? How much did individuals benefit, as people and as company servants? Were the projects of value? In the concluding section of this article, the Chief Executive, some of the clients and the participants are invited to make comments nine months after the event when they have had time to reflect on the experience.

View from the Top

David Sutton invited both the client organisational executives and the participants to state their views. The challenge is readily taken up:

> Certainly the programme was something wholly new. A small family company was designating a key group as its first-level managers for the first time and seeking to develop their skills. The anxiety reported by David Sutton was extremely apparent; indeed two individuals actually left the company rather than accept that they needed to "become" professional managers.
>
> However the programme achieved some quite outstanding goals.
>
> A real team was forged in the face of the adversity of undertaking projects that has continued of its own volition ever since. At a time when the growth of the organisation was fragmenting activities, SEMAP (Senior Executive Management Action Learning Programme) provided the catalyst for the operational management team to coalesce.
>
> A range of extremely important projects was worked on that, whilst their conclusions are now taken for granted, have made a service contribution. Some

seem routine enough (like computerising control systems) but the vitally important difference, from the action learning approach used, is that the team designed and owns the outcomes.

Most of the projects have been proceeded with — albeit that some are directly actionable and others more ambiguous. The most spectacular was the decision to harmonise the two production technologies used for batch and jobbing print work. A close second was the initiation of a massive subscription renewals improvement campaign to link on to new computer systems.

More subtle areas included work on "communications" in a widely diffused organisation. This led to the creation of team-building procedures in all operational departments. It also influenced greatly the creation of a *Newsletter* for journals' editors entitled "As the Publisher said to the Editor. . .". Finally, major organisational changes in 1986 have involved the creation of a complete programme of communication activities led by the manager whose project this was.

Perhaps the least tangible field of all was the proactive use of the database that exists within a major publishing house. How can secondary and tertiary applications be found? Indeed how can origination be influenced with secondary and tertiary uses in mind? The development of a simple device called the Multiple Use Matrix together with the conceptual modelling of the business still left great ambiguity for those who seek clear and precise management answers. There do not seem to be any in this area, but the synergy already emerging is vastly improved. A wide range of models to influence origination and to evolve secondary and tertiary use disciplines has evolved.

Investment by the Board of Directors to carry forward these and all the other action learning projects is already well in excess of £100,000 and rising.

The sting in the tail of these observations, however, has to be that we, the client, have been poor at debriefing the participants. We were glad to pick up and run with their good ideas but have forgotten that the managers who worked on their refinement now have quite different attitudes and expectations.

With the benefit of hindsight the two directors most responsible who pen these remarks at David Sutton's invitation believe:

(1) at the outset we did not brief the participants well enough as to why the programme was being run, and

(2) at the end of the programme we virtually "abandoned" its members.

Such self-flagellation however would be unjust if we did not realise that we have recognised the abandonment element — not for ourselves but because two of the projects demanded that we do so. The communications project and its follow-through have already been described. Another vitally important project explored the introduction of a formalised personnel function into the organisation. As this moved forward, a staff appraisal scheme has now emerged. One of its key needs is a clarification of job roles and their reclarification again and again as the organisation grows apace.

There can be no search for a static definition of a role in most parts of the organisation, quite simply because the business has been doubling in size for the

past three years and intends to quadruple again over the next four. But reference points and continuing appraisal and review can be and are being built in.

Perhaps nowhere is the debriefing requirement greater than when individuals who worked in the action learning team receive differential treatment thereafter. One has gone on immediately to take an action learning Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme (two of the set were already Master's level graduates). Others have found that a new superior has been introduced into their territory because their own project highlighted the need for an injection of professional expertise readymade rather than acquired by action learning.

Most profoundly of all for us, the limitations of the pure action learning "Q" approach were highlighted. We have an excellent highly motivated group of first-level managers, some of whom are held back predominantly by their lack of "P" — or so we now see. Their debriefing need is indubitably to take on board the body of knowledge.

Having thus put pen to paper at David Sutton's behest, these two chastened representatives of the client organisation are pledged to spend a long session together within the next month to see to it that the issues raised above are addressed professionally. With much promised, the pen is passed to a set member...

A View from the Inside

The following is what one of the course participants has to say about the experience.

The chosen few

As the company had grown over the years, demarcation lines and hierarchies had been introduced, though often on an organic basis. A request to name "managers" in the organisation, pre-SEMAP, would have yielded a range of answers with only a few names in common. The first impact of SEMAP, when the partners announced the names of the participants, was to produce a distinct stratum. This led to some interesting and, at the time, uncomfortable feedback. We thought it was a bold move to organise a programme, demanding in terms of time and effort, involving a quarter of the work force and the entire management tier. Even so, at least five of those not "volunteered" were distinctly unhappy. We were, somewhat bitterly, referred to as the "chosen few" by at least one of those excluded. One of the group never reconciled herself to being classified by "them" as one of "us"; an initial disenchantment which culminated in her leaving the programme and the company.

With hindsight, the "chosen few" split provided a leap towards managerial professionalism and behaviour, and was presumably a necessary process in a small organisation. At the time, though, we wanted the resentment to stop.

Running as a Set

An immediate consequence of start-up and set activity was that we began to behave and, gradually, to think as a team. We were a disparate bunch with a mix of ages, qualifications, experience and responsibilities, ranging from department managers and administrators to cross-functional technical specialists.

Even in a company as small as MCB, we had a lot to learn about each others' jobs and the other activities of the organisation. This helped us to look at the strategic big picture considerations as well as our departmental microcosms.

The set had an agreed rule of confidentiality — we were free to speak our minds on any topic, confident that what we said would not filter back to the partners. Despite close personal friendships, this rule was mostly observed. On the occasion we found it had not been (the intentions were benign), we were most annoyed and, indeed, hurt. The set adviser was similarly constrained.

A frustrating feature of SEMAP was that by the time the process was established, and we were running well as a set, using our various strengths and skills, the programme was nearing completion. Many set meetings meandered seemingly pointlessly, with the occasional highlight. However, we were learning how to do it by doing it, which is the name of the game. Action learning, as we came to know, is not easy for the impatient.

The Results

The projects, mainly internally focused, have produced tangible results and, almost more significantly, have acted as catalysts to a series of spin-offs at strategic level.

We have also, as individuals and as a group, picked up some invaluable insights into time management, interpersonal communications, influencing, using the strengths of others, deadlines, presentations, as well as the increased knowledge of our own study areas and the functional areas of the rest of the group.

The spirit of SEMAP lives on through a series of structured round-table meetings coupled with less structured lunch sessions, concentrating on problem solving, information exchange, "sharing and comparing", and the generation and exploration of ideas. The group is proving both productive and supportive.

Too good to be true? No. The time we spent complaining about lost evenings and weekends. The times we lost faith and enthusiasm, challenged the motives of the Board, argued and fell out, cursed the directors, slandered the set adviser, and swore we would never do it again. Yet, when it was over and we had made our presentations, we would have done.

Inevitably the company's growth has led to the introduction of new people at, around, and in some cases above, the management level of the group. Some avenues for progression upwards have closed or narrowed, and the pain this has caused has been intensified because of the expectations provoked by SEMAP.

Epilogue

Was it worthwhile? Could this sort of programme work elsewhere?

The set were asked to consider these questions and others at the close-down weekend, as well as to make the formal presentations as outlined. Our answers then were that it was worthwhile, and that we ***had*** developed a model that would work elsewhere. Nine months on, those feelings still apply.

Points for Trainers

In the manner of all good action projects, this concludes with some recommendations for action This is a checklist drawn from our "view from the inside" evaluation of the adaptability of this type of model to other smaller companies

- Select your preferred participants and lean on them, rather than allowing them a totally free choice of whether or not to undertake this type of programme Short-term overload or disenchantment can outweigh judgements of longer-term personal and organisational benefits Be tough enough to cope with the resultant culture change and encourage the participants to do the same
- Ensure projects are real and important, and that there is a "client" within the organisation who really cares about the outcome Projects for the sake of learning, rather than for the inherent worth of the project, are dispiriting and demotivating
- Ensure that set meetings, especially in the early stages, have some structure and focus to make them more than a report back As the programme progresses, the set creates its own focus, but can get lost at first
- Insist on and respect the set's confidentiality. Resist urges to ask who has been saying what, and ignore anyone who tells you
- Small project teams, rather than individual projects, would have been an interesting variation on our experience Cross-functional teams would discourage "compartmentalisation"
- Expect and accept a mid-term lag or loss of interest, but keep some pressure on by insisting on regular status reports
- Keep deadlines tight enough to concentrate the mind, but not so tight that normal work will be substantially interfered with On reflection (although unsure at the time) six months was about right.
- Be positive and trust the judgement of your selected participants enough to explore recommendations thoroughly, if unable to agree to implementation there and then. If you do not trust them, do not recommend they do a programme such as this
- Chase your managers for action following the recommendations. Anyone can have good ideas (and this type of programme is sure to generate many good ideas) but putting them into action is notoriously difficult, and often requires assistance
- Allocate time to the set away from telephones and other distractions for meetings Insist on no interruptions
- Find a set adviser from outside the company if possible, to prevent too much introspection. An experienced outsider's questions and guidance are more likely to bring out lateral thoughts and challenge assumptions than someone close to the company
- Insist on formal presentations, and well prepared and presented project documents It puts the mind in order very effectively to have to plan and "sell" a proposal, rather than to waffle through some half-formed thoughts Insist on high standards

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Learning in Style — Reflections on an Action Learning MBA Programme

by
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Mobil Oil Co

Introduction

Much is written in the literature on the theory and principles of action learning but comparatively little is available to describe the process from the viewpoint of a set member. This article hopefully breaches that gap by describing my own experiences as a member of the first London set to complete the action learning MBA programme with the International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB). The article is based on the concluding logbook summary submitted as part of the course requirements. It reviews the effectiveness of the learning experience throughout the 18-month course, looking particularly at the opportunities to use various styles of learning in different parts of the programme. It also attempts to provide some insights into the usefulness of action learning as an approach to an MBA degree programme.

The IMCB Programme

It is probably useful at this stage to describe briefly the structure and philosophy of the IMCB degree course. The MBA programme consists of a residential start-up fortnight, followed by 30 weekly evening sessions of four hours each and six residential weekends. The first half of each evening session is a formal input on one of five core syllabi in Marketing, Finance, Operations Management, Human Resources and Strategic Management. The last two hours of each session are reserved for set discussions in the action learning mode, and are therefore left totally unstructured to be used in whatever way the set decides. Tutors and facilitators do not get involved in this session although they do occasionally observe the proceedings.

The start-up fortnight is a general introduction to the programme. Here each core syllabus is introduced and the participants start to bond into the set which will be the main vehicle for learning. Each residential weekend covers a major topic such as Communication and Presentation Skills or Design and Management of an MBA Project. The weekend topics are generally designed so as to be useful for the final MBA project which is the centrepiece of the programme. However, considerable time is reserved during each residential weekend for set work through action learning.

Assessment is by submission of five written analyses of cases (WACs), one for each core course, two comparative projects based on the member's job and company and a Masters project centred on a real issue from the member's work

environment. This project and the associated literature review account for just under half the total marks. The Masters project must be for a specific senior management client in the company, must be real and significant to the individual and must involve action on implementing whatever proposals are generated. It is therefore not sufficient to theorise and make recommendations; the project must involve action.

The London (1) set consisted of eight individuals from seven very different companies in the private sector including publishing, oil, electronics and manufacturing. All the members involved were operating at managerial level and three were company directors. The mix of disciplines was ideal, with two marketers, two accountants, two personnel people and two members with production backgrounds. Almost the full range of management skills was therefore represented in the set. The only major drawback was the geographical spread of the members from Northampton to Orpington. This meant long travelling times and pre-empted the possibility of impromptu set meetings.

The set met for its start-up fortnight at the Simpact Centre near Portsmouth in October 1983. Evening set meetings then took place at the Reform Club in London each Tuesday night from November 1983 till July 1984. Masters projects were submitted in April 1985 and we all graduated that July. This article was written more than a year after the end of the programme, enabling my experiences to be placed in a wider context.

Learning Styles

One major benefit of an action learning approach is that it provides a greater range of learning opportunities than a more traditional programme. For this reason, I have classified my own learning experiences into four learning styles rather than simply given a chronological account of the course. Since the programme itself utilised the learning styles questionnaire of Honey and Mumford[1], I have used their classifications of Activist, Reflector, Pragmatist and Theorist for this analysis. Their learning styles model is, of course, a development of Kolb's earlier work where learning is seen as a circular process involving Concrete Experience followed by Reflection and Observation, the formulation of Abstract Concepts and Generalisations and finally the testing of their implications in new situations through Active Experimentation. My own Masters project was clearly seen to move several times through this cycle.

The learning styles questionnaire is administered as part of the selection process for the MBA programme. So at the start-up fortnight each participant was given the opportunity to identify his own learning style preferences with the help of the guidebook *Using your Learning Styles*[2]. The questionnaire results are most meaningfully presented using a four quadrant approach as shown in Figure 1. The activist and theorist scores are plotted on opposite ends of the vertical axis with pragmatist and reflector scores similarly portrayed on the horizontal axis. A detailed description of the four learning styles is available in Honey and Mumford[1]. In the course of this paper the key characteristics of each style will be discussed briefly.

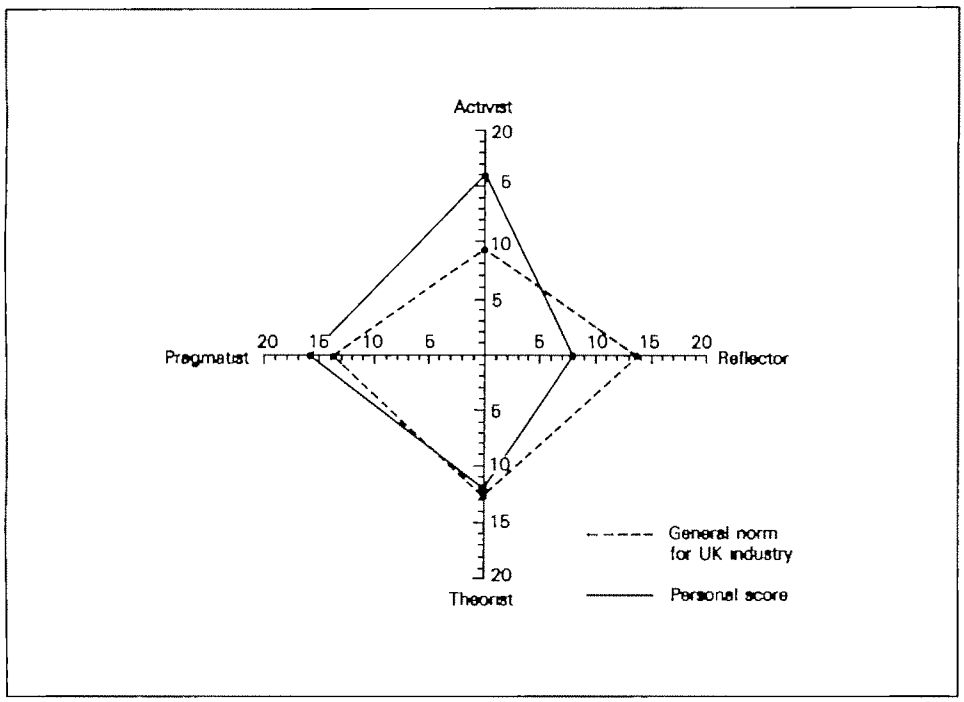


Figure 1.

Figure 1 also shows my own score on the learning styles questionnaire compared with the norms identified for a wide cross-section of managerial and professional people working in UK industry. My own style preferences are seen to be activist/pragmatist with an average theorist preference but a low rating as a reflector. Throughout the London (1) MBA set there was a wide distribution of LSQ scores representing the full spectrum of styles. So although my analysis of the course will inevitably reflect my own preferences, other members of the set would probably see each learning experience in a different light.

The Activist

My own predominant learning style is activist. It is not therefore very surprising that much of my learning was achieved by taking advantage of new experiences, problems or opportunities, The activist likes to be thrown in at the deep end, to take the limelight, to deal with a crisis, to lead discussions and give presentations. The whole MBA programme, particularly the live project, provided ample opportunity to exercise this style.

My Masters project was entitled "Face to Face Employee Communications". It was concerned with identifying and implementing effective means of upward and downward communications in the company's head office. The main thrust of the project was the introduction of a variation on team briefing into the company. The key action stages were an internal survey on employee communications to justify implementing new communications systems, gaining senior management commitment to the project, training managers and supervisors in the principles of the new system and implementation.

The major learning point of the whole project, if not the whole programme, was how to sell proposals to a senior management team. Once gained, the skill and confidence to do this is a major asset to any manager. The long process involved in influencing senior management culminated in a 30-minute presentation on which the whole future of the project rested. It was therefore thoroughly prepared and rehearsed both in the department and in the MBA set until every conceivable angle had been covered and every potential problem anticipated. The presentation used positive feedback to present the opinion survey findings and win management commitment. This presentation was undoubtedly the highlight of the MBA programme from my viewpoint.

Action learning projects rarely sail on calm seas — the learning is usually greatest when they almost run aground. There is always a risk in a live project that unforeseen circumstances, totally beyond one's control, will prevent implementation. This occurred in my project just as the main problems seemed to have been overcome. Management had become committed to a team briefing system, supervisors had been trained in its use and the first two briefs had gone out to the organisation. Then in the space of a few months, my own boss (the project client), his boss and the company president were all transferred to new assignments overseas. At around the same time I became very involved in the personnel aspects of a company acquisition which became my major work objective. Overnight, the environment changed and the new key managers replacing those who had left, while very sympathetic to improving employee communications, felt uncomfortable with a new system in whose development they had played no part. The project therefore had to return to the drawing board for a relaunch the following year.

As it turned out this crisis provided the opportunity to review the system, reflect on its shortcomings and improve on the initial approach. The team briefing system ultimately put in place survives to the present day because of the care taken to implement it properly and the lessons learned in what became known as the pilot project. However, implementation was not achieved until a few months after my MBA was completed.

Because of my activist learning preference much of my learning from the core courses came through working on the written analyses of the cases (WACs) on which they were assessed. This was particularly true of the Marketing WAC — "The Rise and Fall of the EMI Scanner" and the Finance WAC — "The Kendle Company". In the latter case, the WAC provided the motivation to learn the basic principles of accounting which might otherwise never have been digested. Extensive discussion of the WACs in set meetings was a major source of learning in each core course. The residential weekends involving personal activity were also very useful especially those concerned with Communication and Presentation Skills.

The Reflector

Reflection is the learning style which I tend to use least and therefore required considerable application on my part. Reflectors are most comfortable when they can listen and observe, review what has happened, engage in painstaking research and produce detailed analyses of situations. My own introduction to painstaking

research took place during our introduction to Information Science at the start-up fortnight. To equip us for our forthcoming project literature review, we visited Portsmouth Polytechnic Library to try out a manual literature search. This proved an interesting but frightening experience, confirming my dread of detailed research in libraries. I made an instant decision to use computer searches wherever possible in reviewing the literature on employee communications.

To encourage reflection throughout the course we were all asked to keep a logbook of our experiences over the 18 months, under "threat" that this was a requirement for award of the degree. The activists among us found this very hard and I must confess that entries were made at fairly long intervals. However, since much of this article is based on that logbook, these entries have not been totally in vain.

My first entry in the logbook was made at the end of the start-up fortnight which compared the usefulness and enjoyability of each daily session. The most useful was probably the introduction to each set member's company through presentations of monographs. A 6,000-word monograph on the company's business and one's own role in it is a prerequisite for joining the course. The most enjoyable sessions were the Summertown Case Study, introducing the basic concepts of marketing, and the day spent practising communication skills. Overall, the start-up fortnight was excellently designed and executed and proved a superb experience both socially and academically. It provided a lucid introduction to all five core courses, enabled insights to be gained into each others' companies, and formed a cohesive group through which the action learning process could be developed. The evening courses could start on a high point.

By the Christmas respite at the end of 1984, two months into the programme, most of our logbooks were recording fairly different feelings. The common feeling in the set was that action learning equated with do-it-yourself. We were certainly beginning to appreciate the full meaning of Revans' phrase "comrades in adversity". Additionally, the importance of managing effectively the interfaces between family life, the work environment and the MBA programme had become a major preoccupation for almost everyone. My own logbook focused strongly on "survival strategies", ranging from keep-fit programmes to detailed time management for every hour of the day. Even reading the morning paper on the commuter train had become a forgotten luxury as we submerged in a sea of textbooks, articles and essays. Another problem common to most of us was that we came to expect no recognition from our sponsoring companies of the added burdens posed by the course.

Many other reflections were faithfully recorded in my logbook at regular intervals throughout the course. Many are reproduced elsewhere in this article. For example, the early demise of my pilot project forced me to reflect seriously on the basic principles of team briefing and to rethink many of my ideas. These reflections ultimately enabled the relaunch to succeed. Nevertheless, despite being fully aware of its benefits, I personally still feel uncomfortable with this learning style.

The Theorist

Theorists like systems, models and concepts, the opportunity to challenge assumptions and distinguish patterns. They enjoy stretching themselves

intellectually by analysing complex situations and generalising reasons for success or failure. Personally, I am quite well attuned to this style and discovered this early in the course when we examined our own learning styles questionnaires and Belbin's Team Roles Inventory. Initially the group was very sceptical about the results from both questionnaires, but within a few weeks they had been totally vindicated, forecasting with deadly accuracy the roles which each member would play in the set throughout the rest of the programme.

The theorist heading is probably a good one under which to consider the core courses, but I will discuss the Human Resources course under the pragmatist style since, in my case, so much of the material could be applied at work.

The Marketing core course ideally reflects the theorist learning preference. The four Ps of product, place, price and promotion provide a neat and logical structure for the theory. Though not myself a marketer, I found this to be the most interesting of the five core subjects. The book round which the Marketing course is structured, *Maximising Marketing Effectiveness*[3], is beautifully written, simple without being simplistic, concise without being confusing and relates marketing concepts to real-life situations. While the set reading for each marketing session was virtually unattainable, the advance preparation ensured that the evening sessions were lively, meaningful and participative.

The Strategic Management core course has also obvious appeal to theorists. My own view is that it is somewhat divorced from the realities of business life in the turbulent economic environment of the 1980s. Much of the theory makes assumptions based on the comparatively stable environment of the 1960s and early 1970s before the oil crisis. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the course, particularly the Kitchen Queen case study and the essay on the company's internal planning process which later formed a foundation for one of the comparative projects. My key learning point from this course was the Strategy Formulation Process which is an invaluable tool in any planning situation.

I do not intend to describe the Finance and Operations Management core courses in any depth. With a tendency for glazed eyes at the very glimpse of accounts, I found Finance an uphill struggle, but learned a lot along the way. My own weakness in this area made me much more sympathetic to the plight of others in subjects where I felt more comfortable. With mathematical inclinations, I found Operations Management relatively easy although I doubt whether I will ever get the chance to use techniques such as exponential smoothing in my own working life.

My theorist preference surfaced early in my project with an idea on how the standard team briefing system applied by the Industrial Society might be simplified for use in a multi-layered organisation. Although the idea had strong face validity, it did not work well in practice. Proving this empirically was a learning experience in itself, stressing the need to look before leaping. Interestingly, the Industrial Society team briefing rules were totally vindicated during the project both in the literature and in practice. Theorists sometimes need to learn the hard way!

The Pragmatist

Pragmatists learn best from activities where there is an obvious link between the subject matter and a problem or opportunity on the job. They like to try out

techniques, focus on practical issues and be given immediate opportunities to implement what they have learned. The two comparative projects enabled me to exploit this learning style to the full. The first is an analysis of one's own job and how it relates to the rest of the company. My own proved invaluable in internal discussions on a wide range of policy issues and I reorganised my own work group as a result of insights gained from this project.

The second asks one to analyse the organisation as if one were the chief executive and then propose solutions to the problems and opportunities identified. I was very fortunate in that the project coincided with an Organisational Improvement Programme in which I was already involved. I analysed the company under the four headings of strategy, structure, systems and shared values and developed a number of recommendations for change. Some of these recommendations were in fact implemented by the company.

The Human Resources core course dealt with my own area of operation and provided almost weekly opportunities for on-the-job application. I was particularly pleased that IMCB chose to analyse employee relations from a human resources perspective rather than the more traditional industrial relations/compensation viewpoint. This is a refreshing variation on the standard personnel theme. My own philosophy of employee relations has been considerably reshaped as a result of Alan Mumford's sessions and the key textbook, *Understanding Organisations* by Charles Handy[4]. The concepts of managing change, differentiating the organisation and assessing organisational style exemplified by "The Leisure Group" case study now find almost daily applications in my job. In moving to a new job in a different part of the company, I have found these materials very useful in establishing new approaches to human resources.

Of course, the most pragmatic element of the course was the MBA project which involved identifying a pressing company issue, forming theories on its solutions and testing these out in practice. Employee Communications was highlighted as the key employee relations issue for the company in 1984, and this project was concerned with addressing it. The client for the project was my immediate boss, the Employee Relations Manager, who was very keen to see this issue addressed. Employee Communications is an ideal subject for an action learning project because it is so specific to the environment in which it is being applied. There is no immediate fund of knowledge on which to rely. It is therefore a rich source of what Revans calls "Q" learning — that which can only be learned through experience. My pragmatist inclinations were exercised to the full as reflections on actions led to theories for experimentation several times around the learning cycle.

Action Learning

The foregoing summary shows that learning has been achieved to varying degrees in all four styles. Let us now look briefly at the contribution of the action learning set to this process.

The start-up fortnight enabled some enthralling group dynamics to be experienced. This included a complete reversal of leadership roles during the fortnight: the comfort of two small groups of four followed by the discomfort of

switching their membership and the final bonding into one coherent group of eight. However, no real action learning took place over the first few months of operation. Set meetings tended to get bogged down in process without getting down to much productive work. The breakthrough came around mid-January when the set discussed various approaches to the literature search and the problems of margin drift in one member's company. The issue of the Marketing WAC then pushed the set from the "storming" into the "performing" mode of operation. Therefore, discussions of WACs dominated the action learning sessions up to midsummer.

After the enthusiasm generated at the first residential weekend on the design and management of MBA projects, everyone assumed that project discussions would dominate the set activity. However, by mid-February, almost everyone had abandoned their projects due to work overload. Accordingly, most of the action learning was achieved through discussions of WACs rather than MBA projects. Indeed, my own project was one of the few to receive detailed consideration at more than one evening session.

Since the MBA projects were mostly written and implemented after formal set meetings had ceased, they received insufficient consideration by the set. This was because the problems of geographical separation made set meetings difficult to organise. So they were very intermittent and often poorly attended. Much of the opportunity to learn from each others' project experiences was therefore lost. Nevertheless, even at a distance, the set provided psychological support for its members who were often under severe pressures at work and at home. One or two members experienced personal crises at work which I doubt they would have survived but for the set's support. As "comrades in adversity" we often felt that other members of the group were the only ones who could understand the pressures we were under. Boddy's[5] three distinct functions for a set meeting — project resource, source of pressure and psychological support — were all experienced by our own set, but especially psychological support.

One conflict in the course design was that between assessment and development; I felt that often the pressure to produce academic results through the various projects combined with work overload led to too much individualism. The need to pass the degree tended to subjugate the fullest use of opportunities for learning. This said, we all learnt many times more from each other than participants on a traditional business programme. Often, this learning involved insights into our own characters and how we performed in groups, rather than simply factual knowledge about each others' businesses and experiences. We have all learned a tremendous amount from each others' situations.

Conclusions

Overall, the course has been stimulating with many insights into other set members' experiences and companies. The opportunity to use the real-work situation as a learning environment in the three main projects has proved invaluable. It is arguable whether this particular programme constituted action learning in its fullest sense, since much of the MBA project work was carried out with minimal set input. Nevertheless, this is a very effective way to educate managers since it is immediately relevant to their needs, provides a bridge between the work

environment and the learning situation and focuses on application and implementation as well as theory. I thoroughly recommend it as a way to develop managers for tomorrow's needs.

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Part Three: Further Thoughts

The Learning Equation: An Introduction

by
Reg Revans

In this life, all persons must learn something. But what *fresh?* The word "learning" may mean all things to all people; for one may learn to speak different languages, to play different instruments, to solve hard crossword puzzles, to write computer programs, and to set up in business; one may even learn to hold one's tongue when unfairly attacked in academic argument. A collection of sea-lions in Hamburg once learned to play Scottish airs on klaxon horns... Learning has the widest scope.

Whatsoever we pursue, some ways of saying or doing fresh things can be got from others — whether we like it or not. One is told or shown, beginning with Mother's warning, "No more sweets unless you say 'Thank you' for the last lot!" and going on later to copy Einstein's mass-energy equation from the blackboard, after the professor had copied it there out of a book. Throughout life, one is told by endless authorities what to do next, and one learns to obey. Much so picked up has already long existed, so it is here to be called *programmed,* and denoted by *P.*

Yet much other learning also comes, neither from command nor example, but from one's own experience. Finding out for oneself may also be very mixed, like walking into a brick wall, making other mistakes, realising something does not work as expected, dreaming up a new recipe after the Chinese take-away, altering the shape one was told to make it by the last architectural critic, or, occasionally, deliberately asking quite fresh questions — like Newton, enquiring whether the force keeping the moon close to the Earth was also that pulling the apple to the ground. Knowledge, ideas, attitudes, skills, new perceptions of what goes on are always turning up; what is so discovered, moreover, generally tells one something new about the self. "Well! I must say! You do live and learn!" is so often said after the shock of finding out from one's own experience that some hallowed belief was long untrue. Some call it a lucky guess, or "intuition", or "something crossing the mind". Learning of this nature comes from *questioning* insight, and is denoted by *Q.* Since it cannot be brought about deliberately, nor by programmed drill, it is stochastic, a product of the random. Simplistically, we may say that fresh learning is the sum of programmed instruction and questioning insight; without pretending to invoke any algebraic calculus, we may write this as $L = P + Q$: the learning equation. We note that *P* is also the initial letter of Professor, Panjandrum, Past, Pandect, Platitude, Pantologist, Package, Poppycock and Piffle; while *Q* introduces us to Qualm, Quandary, Quiz, Query, Quixotic, Quarry, *Qui Vive* and *Quid Pro Quo.*

So brief an outline of learning afresh tempts further terms. We can put *O* before *P* and *R* behind *Q: O* for "origins", parental gifts like physique to survive and

genes to identify; *R* for "responses", from "rejoicing" to "repentance", to lived experience. John Locke, best of English philosophers, holds this the source of all knowledge, so cardinal to learning. But, since *O* is constant throughout our life, it is not about ***change*** within our minds. And, although much experience cannot be the programmed instruction of some teacher, it is still the lesson of circumstance, or *P* imposed by the authority of Nature — stimulating, perhaps, its fair share of *Q*. Thus, of *O* we have no need, and *R* has already been taken care of. As we shall see, given range enough within themselves, *P* and *Q* are sufficient.

It is not necessary to invoke spurious mathematical propositions to suggest that our two terms from the right-hand side of the equation may get out of balance. The Association of American Colleges, for example, in its essay, ***Integrity in the College Curriculum***, has scathingly indicted the bulk of undergraduate courses for presenting so much *P* and inviting so little *Q;* it forecasts disaster for the national education system, schools no less than universities. While that report was not the *cause* of this monograph, it could well be seen as its *occasion,* reinforced by the publication, also in 1985, of an article in Britain's leading management magazine suggesting that action learning, founded on *Q*, is now displacing traditional courses in our business schools, founded on *P*... But the two terms are to be seen as the poles of many other contrasts; the Yin and Yang of the Celestial Empire, the sparring partners of Platonic dialectic, and choice between being wise and being clever are three among them.

Finally, this work is about *social* learning. Some of the greatest ideas were the fruits of solitude — Moses up the mountain, Christ in the wilderness, Bunyan in Bedford Gaol, and many masterpieces of genius — but they are not here for our present attention. How best can we help ***each other?***

Some relevant quotations:

- "Two extravagances: to exclude Reason, to admit only Reason" — *Blaise Pascal.*
- "The chief wonder of education is that it does not ruin all concerned in it, teachers and taught" — ***The Education of Henry Adams,*** (p. 55).
- "One learns what one has it in one to learn, not what one's teachers have it in them to teach" — R. G. Collingwood, *Speculum Mentis,* (p. 12).

Effectiveness in Management Development*

by
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Introduction

The views I offer here derive from my preferred definition of management development which is "an attempt to improve managerial effectiveness through planned and deliberate learning process", a definition largely taken from the work of the Training Services Agency in the UK in 1977.

For someone like myself who has been involved in management development for more than 20 years, it is possible to be alternately optimistic and pessimistic about the progress that has been made during that time. Perhaps the most crucial development, at least in the United Kingdom and probably in the United States, was a growing recognition that the purpose of management was to achieve results rather than to administer bureaucratic processes. The early impact of Peter Drucker, followed in the 1960s by the Management by Objectives (MBO) wave, caused a recognition, at least at the conceptual level, that the improvement of management performance centred on the definition of results to be achieved; this became expressed as the idea that what mattered was outputs rather than inputs.

This revised outlook was by no means fully incorporated in managerial work. The flood of MBO work reached full tide and then receded. However, the flood left behind some useful sediment. Not only do more managers, than would have been the case 20 years ago, talk about objectives, standards and criteria of performance, but in the particular field of management development performance appraisal processes have in many organisations adopted objective setting as a crucial first feature in the process of appraisal. There have been other significant developments in our understanding of what effective managers do to which I shall be referring later in this article. However, it seems to me that these partial although important recognitions of what defines effectiveness in management have not been drawn together to create effective management development processes.

The Threefold Nature of Effectiveness in Management Development

Effectiveness in management development will only arrive when we manage to understand and then implement action on three different aspects of effectiveness:

- Varying definitions of effective managerial behaviour.
- Develop a process which emphasises activities in which managers are required to be effective, rather than emphasising the knowledge necessary for action.

*This paper was first presented at the 1984 World Congress on Management Development in June.

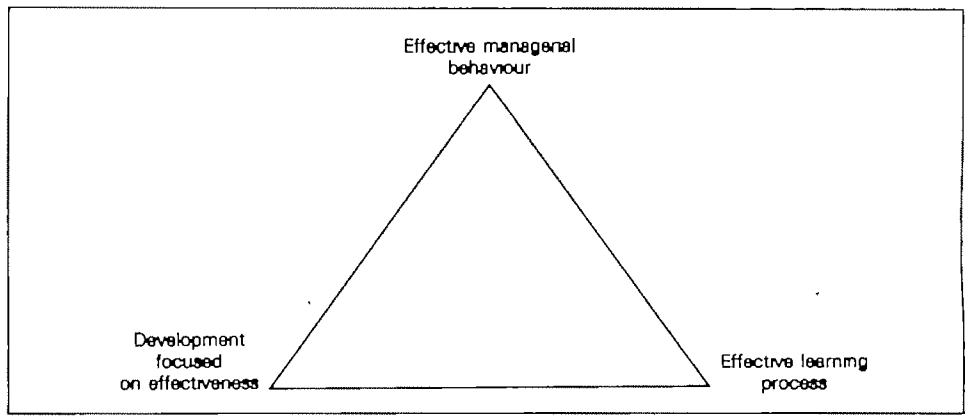


Figure 1.

- The identification of a learning process which is effective for the individual or group rather than being economical and convenient for tutors or trainers.

Effective Managerial Behaviour

The MBO approach mentioned earlier has been one of the major causes of a shift in attention to what managers actually do rather than to abstract and generalised statements of what they *ought* to do. The other major impact stems from the work of Carlson[1], Rosemary Stewart[2] and Mintzberg[3]. Peter Drucker[4] provided in two sentences a crucial bridge between the two kinds of discovery. "Efficiency is concerned with doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things." What might be called the classical view of the nature of management can be summarised as:

- forecast/plan;
- organise;
- motivate;
- co-ordinate, and
- control.

The work of Carlson, Stewart and Mintzberg showed that the ways in which these concepts have been created, and the attempt to apply them as a structure for developing managers was misconceived, unrealistic and unhelpful. However the most useful though most devastating aspect of their work is not their demolition of one list of major managerial tasks and the replacement of that list by another one, but their common discovery that any generalised statement about managerial activities was likely to be at least partially and possibly substantially incorrect for any particular manager or group of managers. They found substantial variations in required managerial behaviour. In much the same way as organisational theorists such as Lawrence and Lorsch[5] were conducting the research to show that effective organisation structures were contingent upon a large number of factors rather than on some single ideal view of an organisation, the managerial activities in which any individual had to be effective was seen to depend on the specific kind of job

and on his/her interpretation and others' interpretation of his/her role and responsibilities within it.

These discoveries have not, for a variety of reasons, had the major impact on our management development process that they ought to have done. There has been insufficient acceptance of the implication of these discoveries, i.e. that work to help a manager be more effective depends more on recognising and dealing with the specifics of his/her job than on helping him/her through generalisations about what managers need to know. Although there may have been some improvement in the capacity of organisations to analyse management training requirements, it does not seem that, probably for a majority, needs analysis is relatively superficial and leads to the facile adoption of training courses whose content differs remarkably little from one organisation to another. Even where the professional management development adviser knows what he/she ought to do there can be considerable obstacles in terms of actually engaging line managers in the analytical process. The definition and interpretation of what is meant by effective behaviour takes time and energy which managers on the whole would rather give to some other activity. This is most obviously but not uniquely true for a demanding process such as Repertory Grid.

I believe that one of the causes of relative ineffectiveness in this area within organisations has been an over-emphasis on developing managers for the future instead of working on issues of current requirements. This argument almost certainly applied with even greater strength to training and education institutions which offer taught experiences outside the organisation. It is even clear that for such institutions, the identification of the nature of effectiveness in management has been scarcely affected by the work described above. It is understandable, although not acceptable, that they should see themselves as having to operate on generalised views of management processes because they were offering "open" programmes, and not dealing with individual companies. Since, however, all the major institutions now offer "in-house" programmes, we might have hoped to see a substantial shift towards effectiveness. It seems more likely that what we have seen is a relatively cosmetic shift to the design of specific material for particular companies rather than a basic shift in the nature of the programme. The major teaching institutions seem to show exactly that, i.e. they are more in the business of conveying generalised knowledge than they are in the business of helping managers to define and improve their own effectiveness criteria.

As we shall see again later, the significance of the particular kind of contribution made by the major business schools is that inevitably and properly the contribution they make for the tiny number of managers with whom they deal is extended through the use of their concepts by trainers, tutors and educators in less creative and research-based teaching organisations.

The thrust of my argument takes me to the view that too much of our management development work derives from an inadequate assessment of effective managerial behaviour, and that that assessment is too often based on a view which deals with what is efficient rather than what is effective.

Development Processes Emphasising Effectiveness

One of the problems in management development has certainly been that we have detached it from the reality of managerial processes. As I have just illustrated, I think we have detached it from the reality of managerial behaviour. We have also detached it from the reality of the perceptions and understanding of managers themselves. With rare exceptions (see the contingency theory mentioned earlier), managers are not concerned about the knowledge possessed by boss, colleagues or subordinates. Their characteristic expression about a manager's effectivenes is whether he/she can get things done. The fact that they are not aware of, and tend to be impatient about, the knowledge and skills required to enable a manager to get things done is not of course in itself an argument for not providing these elements. It is a practical and psychological argument (insofar as these two are different) for starting from the reality of where managers are rather than imposing on them our views about what they need.

Since effectiveness is defined clearly by the results actually secured and not by the knowledge someone possesses, it would seem sensible to concentrate in our management development processes on helping managers to learn from actions undertaken rather than providing them with conceptual statements of what managers ought to do or even with analytical experiences of what other managers have done or might have done. Instead of giving emphasis to the provision of knowledge and asking managers to interpret and use that knowledge in subsequent action, it would be both more appropriate and more likely to be successful if we gave prime attention to issues of action and secondary attention to issues of the required knowledge. Knowledge and the capacity to analyse and product solutions to problems are necessary but insufficient contributors to effective action. In the same way, primary attention to managerial skills may be misplaced although not inappropriate. By this I mean that the first stage of attention should be on a desired managerial result rather than the skills required for managerial activities.

The description so far may sound like another plea for action learning. In the sense that I am proposing prime attention to working on real management problems, there is certainly a common basic philosophy. In the sense that I am not talking exclusively about the use of defined projects, or the creation of a group of managers discussing projects, I am in fact advancing a rather wider proposition. I am arguing that by taking issues of effectiveness as the prime focus of a development activity, we are engaging managers in a process with which they would be more familiar and more sympathetic than if we engaged them in a process (the acquisition of knowledge and skill) with which they are less familiar and sympathetic. I will quote briefly four illustrations of this shift of emphasis.

Case 1

The final stages of a two-week management development programme were geared to the participants reviewing the corporate strategy of the group for which they worked. The intention of the sessions, which included a presentation to the chief executive, was that participants should be more familiar with the reasons for the corporate strategy instead of just criticising it from their level in the business. In later programmes, we made a significant change since it seemed to us less rele-

vant that participants should know the corporate strategy than that they should be encouraged to take action on strategic issues affecting their own business. They were instead asked to make proposals on a significant business problem currently affecting most of them. One example was that they were asked to work on the nature of, and possible reactions to, competition from Japanese manufacturers. While they could not do anything about corporate strategy, except perhaps understand it better, they could do something in their own companies about the Japanese "threat".

Case 2

A company which had revised its sales objectives and organisation structure had some concern that the managers involved might not have the skills necessary to achieve the changed objectives. As a result of analysis with them, it became clear that, although probably a number of them were lacking in some skills, the more crucial problem was that, although apparently committed to the revised objectives, they had not fully set up the action necessary to implement them. The prime effectiveness concern was not therefore the skills of sales management, but the identification of specific actions to implement the broad objectives agreed.

Case 3

A company which had changed the composition and structure of its marketing function found that a number of those involved would be unable to produce what was required because they were not fully equipped with marketing skills. In the course of discussion with them, the emphasis was shifted from the acquisition of skills to the implementation of skills. An in-house marketing programme was devised which, in addition to giving managers the necessary tools, took them through to the identification of specific marketing projects which needed to be undertaken. The programme was designed to meet both general marketing skill requirements in the organisation, the specific requirements of the projects which had to be undertaken, and the completion of real work to meet the needs of the business.

Case 4

MBA programmes normally provide participants with a better understanding of the various functional areas of management such as marketing, finance and production. The expectation is that managers who have acquired this knowledge may be able to manage these functions better, or may, through a better understanding, have a better relationship with other departments. In our MBA programme, we start at the other end of the process by requiring our associates to analyse the nature of relationships between their own function and others in the business, and to make proposals for improvement. While we believe that it may be important for most managers to "understand finance better", we see it as at least as important that they should be helped to take specific actions relevant to their needs in dealing with other functions.

In all of these situations, we avoid simplistic generalisations such as "managers learn by doing" or "all managers should learn through doing a project". There

are some signs that such generalisations are being employed as readily in supposedly sophisticated management development processes as were the older generalisations about management. Learning processes focused on effectiveness must always deal with the reality of the manager's job, and always involve him/her in action on it. However, a manager will not learn enough simply by taking action; it is clear from the literature on action learning that this is not sufficiently understood. The emphasis on projects and action is wholly dominant, to the exclusion of any serious discussion of the learning process.

Of course, the greatest reality of all is what a manager is doing day by day in his normal managerial work. All too little has been done in management development to make effective use of the day-to-day experiences; most attention, as indeed I have just illustrated, has been given to off-the-job processes. I have written elsewhere at length about the possibilities of learning from normal work activities[6]. I have no doubt that this is the major area in which we could improve our productivity. I will not repeat here the illustrations I gave in my book; our need is to be able to help managers to learn from their real-time experience in attending meetings, conducting negotiations, using management control information and so on.

If we tackle issues of effectiveness in these various ways, we will come much closer to resolving the essential paradox of management development. That paradox is that managers claim to learn from experience. Characteristically they talk about the jobs they have done, the bosses they have worked for, rather than about the courses they have attended. Management development schemes have apparently tried to resolve one part of this paradox by encouraging movement between jobs. More often, however, management development processes have continued to emphasise formal off-the-job training and education. Not only have they offered a prescription which does not meet the managers' realities just described, but the processes themselves, i.e. courses, have given no help to managers in re-interpreting and making better use of their on the job development opportunities.

Effective Learning Processes

If we manage to work successfully on the issues of managerial effectiveness in the ways I have not described, we will have created for ourselves the opportunity to set up a virtuous learning circle. It is clear that for many managers involvement in formal management development processes particularly off the job has created a vicious learning sequence. Modern motivational theory tells us that behaviour which is not rewarded is not willingly engaged in again. Clearly, some managers have had useful management training or educational experiences and return to similar experiences subsequently. However the reaction of a majority of managers can scarcely be said to equate to a belief in the probable usefulness of the exercise, although they may have reasons of status, company culture or fear of something worse which may cause them to participate at some level of willingness. Nor is it simply a question of the ways in which many managers experience the unreality of off-the-job processes. The continued absence of evaluation processes as a necessary accompaniment to off-the-job activities ought to be seen as more of a surprise and criticism than it often is. This is more particularly true in my

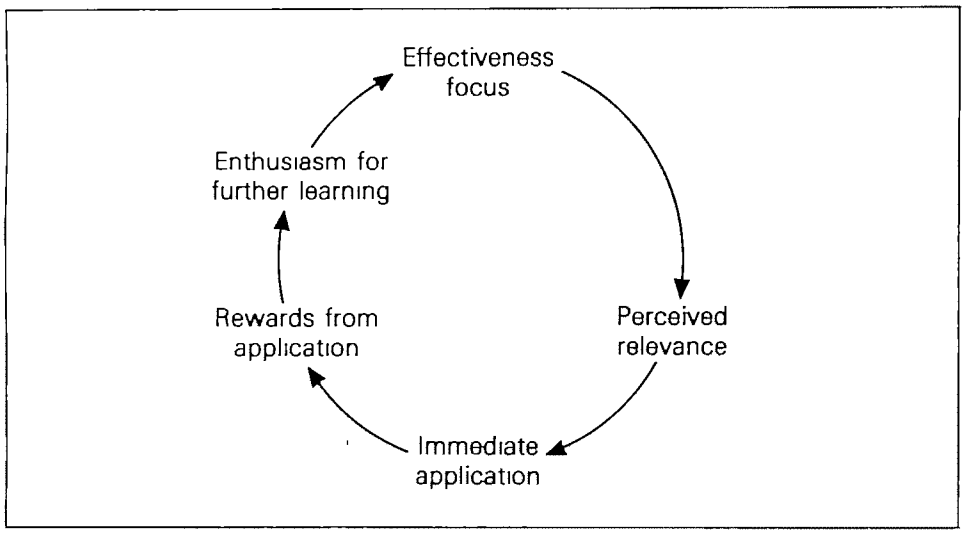


Figure 2.
The Virtuous Learning Circle

mind given the attention that many programmes pay to aspect of knowledge or skill, the acquisition of which can certainly be tested.

Ironically, the emphasis I have given to effectiveness issues certainly makes the evaluation process more difficult and probably make it less absolutely necessary. If you design a process actually to engage people in action, you reduce the requirement to test the extent to which they have applied that which they have learned.

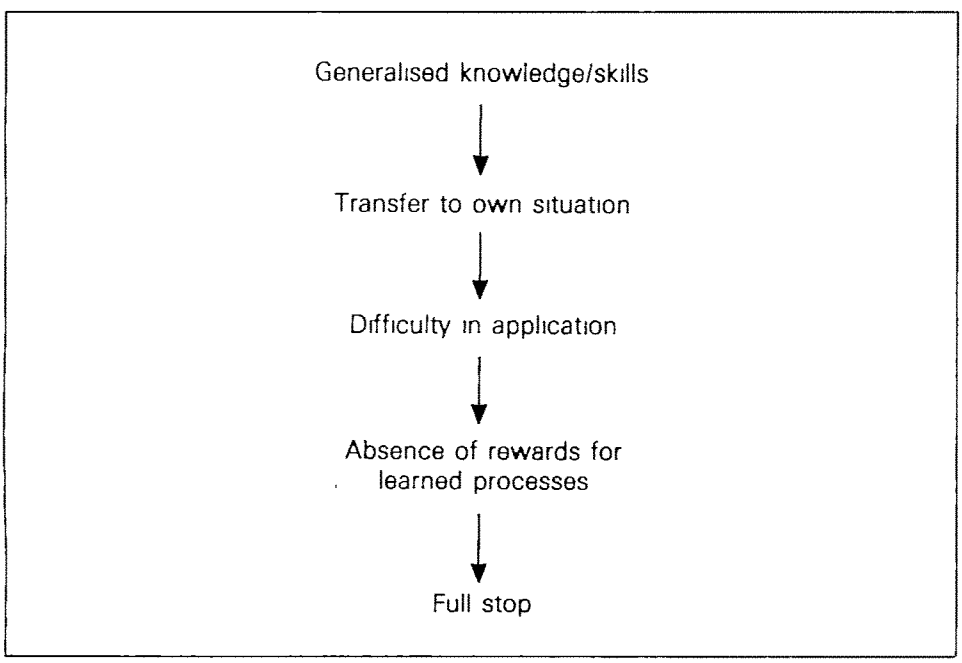


Figure 3.
The Vicious Learning Sequence

Indeed, the whole shift of emphasis to action-based learning helps us to remove one of the major traditional problems of management education and training. It is a logical oddity that having created a situation of unreality, i.e. a structured off-the-job learning experience, and then having done in many cases very little about directing attention to those issues of real personal concern to managers, tutors and trainers have then complained and written learned articles about the problems of transfer of learning.

If we create unreality and do not deal with issues of effectiveness, we ought not to be surprised that managers have problems in transferring what they are supposed to have learned back into their real job situation. Nor should we be surprised that the boss and colleagues to whom they return from the off-the-job experience give no welcome to the kind of learning which the manager brings with him/her. Concentration on those issues which are practically relevant to the manager and his/her colleagues in the real-life situation certainly reduces the transfer problem, both because of the perceived reality of what the manager is engaged in and because there need literally be no transfer in the sense that he/she can be involved in projects and real-time problems drawn from his/her own work which do not then have to be translated. Where learning activities are not primarily and directly based on the manager's own work, we should tackle the transfer problem on our programmes instead of leaving it to the manager to resolve on his/her own on his/her return to work. This means less time on teaching, and more time on how the manager will implement what he/she has learned.

However, emphasis on effectiveness and reality will not, as some writers seem to assume, in themselves completely overcome the need for careful choice of effective learning processes. Management development has been far too subject to "flavour of the month" approaches, each of them claiming to be uniquely appropriate to developing managers. Over the years, we have been told that T groups, grid training, coaching, self-development, action learning, were successively, the answer to our management development problems. In my view, the adoption of any single technique, as the predominant answer to our management development problems, is lazy and incompetent. Nor is the answer in a further proliferation of management development processes. In his most helpful book [7] Huczynski identifies around 300 management development techniques. While in no way wishing to inhibit future creativity, it is my view that productivity in management development will derive from the appropriate use of methods already relatively well known and tried rather than the identification of new processes. I take this view because the application of management development methods is at the moment so clearly both inefficient and ineffective.

We have failed to fit our processes to the needs of the learner. Just as we have not satisfactorily dealt with the reality of how a manager manages, we have not dealt with the reality of how a manager learns. Just as we have swept aside the common perception of managers that they learn through on-the-job processes, a matter of common experience apparently too simple for researchers to cope with, so we have ignored the reality that different managers actually learn differently from the same process. It is an extraordinary fact that educators, trainers and developers know very well that if Brown and Jones both have the same need

to improve an aspect of their managerial performance, and both are taken through the same learning experience, one may learn and one may not. It seems that most tutors having stumbled across this truth painfully, when an individual reacts badly to a learning process, then pick themselves up and hurry on as if nothing had happened. In designing courses, the best that may occur subsequently is that the designers offer a catholic menu of activities, hoping that everybody will get something out of the course. Thus the supposedly well-designed course will include role-plays, films, case studies, lectures, an afternoon in the resource centre; if you are bored by one there is always tomorrow.

It is an extraordinary commentary on management education in both the UK and the US that only in the last dozen years has there been attention at any level of significance to differences in the ways in which people learn. The field was for a long time dominated by fundamentally sterile debates about the virtues of case studies, of business games, of experiential exercises. I take again the absence of action on the part of the major traditional business schools because of their perceived dominance in the rest of the management development world. I cannot think of any major university level contribution in this field apart from the original innovative work by Kolb[8], and the work done in this country by the Centre for the Study of Management Learning. CSML has made a considerable contribution in the literature on issues of the general design of different kinds of learning event, and the significance of the interaction between the tutor and the learner. Although much of their written work is understandably directed at the tutor, I believe they would share with me the view that one of the problems is that the tutor has been given too great a prominence in the learning process. Their efforts quite rightly are geared to helping the tutor be more effective by assessing the learning situation in which he/she is involved.

No doubt because I started from a different kind of environment, my own concern has been with the learner rather than with the tutor. I should not repeat here the arguments and evidence produced by Peter Honey and myself on ways in which it is possible to identify the nature and consequences of an individual's likely preferences on learning. This information is set out for the management developer in[9] and for the learner in[10]. Since the arguments are deployed in full there, I need only say here that the crucial contribution of choosing a learning process appropriate to the style of the individual is going to be the major cause of increased productivity in management development. Whether it is choosing a course, choosing to place somebody on secondment, or selecting someone for a working party, the ability to make use of that experience is going to determine how productive it is.

Honey and I have also argued that knowledge of the learning preferences of managers, actually arriving on a learning experience, can be used to provide a more specific experience. We think it is irresponsible simply to throw a ragbag of activities at a group on the general assumption that their learning styles will be different. Our general proposition is, of course, that the experience should actually be designed as a learning experience, not as a teaching experience. This undoubtedly increases the difficulties for the designers and operators of learning events, and perhaps it is the prospect of such difficulties which has deterred training and education institutions from actually thinking seriously about the learning

process. Nor would understanding by designers and providers of development experiences, while helpful, go sufficiently far. It is surely another prospective leap forward in management development that we should share with managers our improved understanding of learning and cause them to recognise and improve their own learning processes. That is to say, we should incorporate our improved understanding not merely in the design of a more effective event, but we should treat learning as an overt part of the programme. Instead of being an implied and unstudied part of most management development activities, learning should be drawn to the forefront as an explicit activity. Nor should this be confined to an interesting session at the beginning of a programme and perhaps some review of personal development growth at the end of it; we must provide time and resource to help managers consider their learning processes during the programme.

You will notice I have carefully used the word programme rather than course because I see this as being applicable just as much in the situation in which an advisor is counselling someone's development on the job as it would be with a tutor running an off-the-job experience. The reason for this extended attention to the learning process is not merely a matter of logic, of the extraordinary fact that many programmes which claim to help managers to learn never actually address that issue, but also that it is essential as one of the ways in which we will manage to draw together on-the-job and off-the-job development experiences. If in our off-the-job experiences we give sufficient time and attention to engage a manager in understanding his/her own learning, we can also help him/her to see how to apply this knowledge so that he/she continues to learn from similar or equivalent learning experiences when he/she is back on the job. Just as dealing with issues of effectiveness will help reduce substantially the problems of transfer of learning, so, by giving substantial attention to the learning process itself, we can reduce the notorious problem of managers seeing experiences as a series of one-off events with no connection with each other in learning terms.

The phrase continuous learning is now becoming popular. It will be no more than a promotional phrase if we do not provide the learning processes necessary to secure it. It seems clear that some of the people writing about continuous learning are really only talking about a series of training events and not in fact about continuous learning at all.

Successful Management Development

I have tried to draw together in this article three different aspects of effectiveness which I see as major contributors to effectiveness in management development. There are a number of other issues, many of them not course centred, which affect whether management development will be successful in an organisation. Margerison[11] offers a very substantial review of causes of success and failure in management development with which I am in substantial agreement. I want here to pick out only two additional factors. Neither will come as a particular surprise, given the nature of the comments I have made earlier. Firstly, it seems to me that too many management development schemes are dominated by issues about the so-called system, and too little influenced by the needs, requirements and potential for growth of individuals. We will not have effective management

development as long as we encourage systems that are in fact geared to process individuals rather than to develop them. I am surely not alone in shuddering when I hear a personnel director or management development advisor say "All our managers have been through..." It has become all too obvious that some management development schemes measure results by the number of people who have "been through", rather than by achieved results in development.

Nor will it be a surprise to see that I feel we need a better lead from our "centres of excellence" on the processes of management development. Given that it is of their nature to offer open programmes inevitably concentrating on generalisable issues, we could perhaps hope that they will increasingly concern themselves also with the issues of how generalisations can be applied in practice.

At the time of the first World Congress on Management Development in 1981, I was inaccurately quoted as being part of a general attack on the business schools. If in this article I am clearly seen to be offering more criticisms than praise, it is because this is not a paper evaluating the full range of the work of the business schools. In case, however, my comments should be seen as not merely unbalanced in that sense, but also partial because I belong to a new business school, I should perhaps say that some, although not all, of my criticisms are shared elsewhere. The nature of that criticism has remained remarkably similar over the last decade and more. Livingston[12] told us in 1971 that formal management education "tends to distort managerial growth because it over-develops an individual's analytical ability, but leaves his ability to take action and to get things done under-developed". This kind of criticism has surfaced again recently in the US through Peters and Waterman[13] and Behrman and Levin[14].

In this country, the BIM report in 1971[17] and Nancy Fox's report in 1978[16] both suggested important shifts in the provision made by the business schools in the UK. It is also significant to note that Professor Jim Ball, then Principal of the London Business School, while able to claim success in his own terms in other aspects of management education, said that they were "a long way from fulfilling a commitment in any formal sense to enable people to handle their own learning". Finally, it is significant that, according to Freedman, Cooper and Stumpf[17], the relationship which I have sought to establish in this article between effectiveness in management and effectiveness in management development is clearly not present even amongst management researchers. Those who have studied the criteria for managerial effectiveness have not seen management education as a determinant of managerial performance.

I return to my mixed views of optimism and pessimism about the past of management development; I think we can be optimistic about the future if we manage the triangle of effectiveness well. If we do not even change the emphasis in the individual areas, I do not believe management development will be more than a peripheral process pursued by a minority of devotees.

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Developing Managers for the Board

by
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Introduction

A new model of management development, giving greater emphasis to "Type 2" development which integrates with, and derives from, real managerial work, has been established, following a major survey of 144 directors in the UK. Personal interviews ascertained those learning processes which had influenced directors' development, and the resulting data was compared with organisations' claims regarding their provision for formal managerial development opportunities. The problems arising from poorly managed ("Type 3") formal processes and unexplained accidental learning are identified.

The ultimate demonstration of the processes of developing effective managers ought to be seen at the very top of organisations. No in-depth study has previously been available on the development processes which influenced them on their way to the top, or continued to influence them once they reached it. The study reported by Glickman[1] was in fact much more concerned with processes of identification and selection of top managers rather than development. The survey conducted by Margerison[2], subsequently replicated by Margerison and Kakabadse in the US[3], is an interesting questionnaire-based analysis of a wide range of influences. It does not examine the influence of management development schemes nor of particular management development processes. The International Management Centre from Buckingham (IMCB) was sponsored by the Manpower Services Commission to fill this gap at the top level. This article reviews what we found, and the conclusions we drew, from interviewing 144 directors in 41 organisations based in the UK. The organisations ranged from giants such as Unilever and British Telecom to a small printing company with 29 employees. The full Report is available[4].

Individual directors were asked to describe the processes which had influenced their development. Representatives of the organisations (usually the Chief Executive and Personnel Director) were asked to give their views on what the organisation had attempted to offer in the development of managers. The experience and perceptions of individuals and the organisation were often significantly different.

Organisational Aims and Objectives for Development

A formal written statement about the aims, directions and content of management development was unusual, even in those organisations which had an organised approach to management development. Most had to resort to a collection of different statements and, often, to personal memory, in order to provide a picture of what they had been attempting to do.

Elements of Management Development

The phrase "Management Development" is said by Mant[5] to have existed in the UK only since 1951. While some commercial and industrial organisations have been carrying out at least some of the processes identified below for even longer than that, organised management development was, in most of the organisations we visited, of much shorter life. Even some of the largest organisations we visited had been taking a structured view of management development for only around five years, although, equally, we saw some large organisations in which formal processes had applied for at least 30 years. The elements of management development commonly found were:

(1) A statement of the purpose of management development, such as: to ensure that executives are developed or recruited and trained in sufficient numbers to sufficient standards to meet the specialist and general management requirements of the group in the short and the long term.

(2) A statement about the processes to be used in identifying and developing managers. Characteristically, such a statement will refer to individual performance review or appraisal, to the identification of individual training and development needs, the planning and review processes applying to these individual assessments and perhaps to the decision-making powers of those involved in making job movement or development decisions.

(3) Appraisal processes and procedures will be identified, and perhaps some guidance given in written form, possibly supplemented by training on how to carry out the review and development task with individuals.

(4) The range of development processes which might be considered may be indicated either on an appraisal form or in some guidance booklet.

Career Stages and Skill Profiles

We encountered only one organisation which was operating a specific formal career development model, recognising different kinds of development process: for example, in the early years after graduate entry, at middle management level, and at senior management level. The actual processes implemented by several more organisations seemed, however, to recognise implicitly the same sort of issues.

We came across only one reference to a specific profile of the management skills required in that organisation. In the case of some organisations a rather generalised version of this might be found on the appraisal form itself, with one of the relatively familiar lists of management skills.

Even amongst those firms who have an organised management development process, there was an absence of specific statements about the development processes required for someone who was expected to be successful at board level. Most organisations relied on a rather generalised understanding that "good broad management development" at lower levels would somehow produce what was required in the most senior jobs.

Two of the major participants, both multinationals, did have a statement about the kind of development experiences which a Main Board director should have gone through (but not of what they would have to be able to do):

(1) international experience;

(2) both line and corporate (i.e. head office) experience;

(3) experience in more than one product, and

(4) a major business school programme.

Succession, Replacement, Resource Plans

Those organisations which attempted to plan development mostly referred to succession plans, a few to replacement plans, and only one to a resource plan. The differences between the objectives and contents of the three different kinds of plan were not widely recognised. Some organisations had gone through the valuable process of identifying managers who had the capacity to replace people at Main Board level should the occasion occur, and described such plans as succession plans. However, as one personnel director pointed out to us, such plans are really replacement tables. They become succession plans only if there are proper plans for developing the individuals.

Changes in Management Development Systems

The approach of some to management development had changed over the years, either from wholly informal and unstructured to a formal system, or in terms of changes within an existing formal structure. Where organisations had moved wholly informal and unplanned activities to a more structured process, the main cause was the belief or recognition that without improved management development processes the organisation would not meet its objectives either now or in the future. In a number of cases, it was clear that it was only when the organisation had felt hurt by the absence of managers capable of operating at the top level that they had begun to undertake processes designed to provide managers with the required capacity.

Changes within the organisation itself or in its environment had also caused different approaches to management development. A change in the ownership of a company from private to public had in some cases brought about a recognition that different abilities were now needed to run the public companies successfully, which in turn led to the recognition of the desirability of formal management development.

In some organisations, the development of divisional structures of profit centres and of greater decentralisation has had differing and not supportive influences on the kind of management development system operated. Decentralisation and a pushing down of responsibility has created the opportunity for different kinds of development experience lower down, of significant relevance to final Main Board appointment, but at the same time has made the corporate management of such experiences more difficult.

Management Training and Education

I do not distinguish here between training and education, not least because any difference was not recognised by the people we talked to. Some organisations (though only a few of the larger ones) currently provide a full catalogue of management training courses offering a range of skills and also, usually, an ascending level of status of those attending, if not of the content. Rather more organisations provide a number of courses internally, and a few organisations, normally at the smaller end of the scale, provide absolutely none. However, the range of provision currently catalogued internally is rather misleading in relation to what might have been available to the directors we saw when they were going through lower and middle management. On their own account, less was available then than there is now. For whatever reason, only a small minority of the directors we saw had been exposed to a substantial number of internal training courses, or to courses of significant length.

The same comment applied largely to courses taken externally, i.e. they were taken by a minority, in fact, fewer than internal courses; again, most of our directors had not been exposed to them. In addition to the five MBAs in our sample, 17 managers had been on a significant post-experience course. Our definition of a programme was of four weeks or more, which some people would regard as being on the short side.

We were unable to assess the extent to which our directors had taken advantage of whatever internal courses were available when they were going through. Even less were we able to assess whether they had taken advantage of external courses made available through the system rather than through some other accident. We certainly encountered a few directors who were conscious of having been taken through the full "catalogue" of its time and also a few who seemed on their account almost deliberately to have avoided taking more than one or two courses although more had been on offer.

We found one or two organisations who seemed to be making a significant shift in the processes they were using for management development. They provided a more personalised form of development based on individual counselling and individual development programmes. The approach we found in at least one organisation differed from conventional ways of identifying development plans through discussion between boss and subordinate. The process relied instead on a more intensive experience, using an external counsellor to work with a relatively small group or very senior managers. This is a process which has strong justification for people on the brink of a Main Board appointment, because it achieves a highly specific review of needs while getting around the reluctance of people at top level to appraise senior managers.

Overseas Experience

For our multinational respondents, a major problem and difference from past experience occurs because of changes in relationship between the UK and countries abroad. The possibility of providing experience in managing a small company outside the UK seems to be diminishing in most multinationals. One consequence is that the organisation is not providing small or medium-sized profit centre experience

of the kind which used to be available, and which was useful both as a management and as an overseas experience.

Identifying Potential

In addition to the general problem of identifying people with high-level potential, there was the frequently raised issue of identifying them early enough. It is necessary to identify people early enough to push them through the full range of experiences. There was also a conflict between giving people quick experiences early (for example, in a range of functions or products) and yet allowing them to experience management for a function or process long enough for their ability to be properly assessed.

How Far have Formal Systems Worked?

How can they be Evaluated?

The first problem we encountered was that few organisations had established any measurable objective for their management development schemes. They had not specified the particular consequences of specific management development processes and were not in a position to evaluate their management development efforts. Therefore, when some organisations said that the objective of their schemes was to provide competent managers to fill vacancies at the top, that the vacancy had been filled by competent managers and, thus, the scheme must work, the possible lack of connection was not apparent to them.

Each of the "elements" mentioned earlier could be evaluated, but they are not. Perhaps the most unexpected element arising from our discussions was the distance between the views of the organisation about the amount of planning which had gone into job moves and the perception of individual directors about this. Even in organisations which claimed to engage in this practice, most of the directors were either not aware of, or not convinced about, the operation of the planning process in their own individual case. To most of them the scheme (if it existed) was not thought to be an influence on the job moves. Nor had individuals themselves planned job moves on their own account. While, therefore, the vast majority of directors identified job experiences and particular job contents as being crucial in their development, these were generally seen as unaffected by formal management development processes.

The other major element of formal management development processes is training or education, but these were very rarely identified as their single most powerful experience by directors. A few were able to identify specific benefits and consequences and were enthusiastic. A few, on the other hand, identified what they regarded as disastrously inappropriate learning experiences. The reaction of most directors to most courses seems to be rather grey in tone, with no strong feeling of either advantage or disadvantage. The reasons for this were quoted by the directors themselves as being lack of relevance and application.

A third major problem with systems was in the familiar area of appraisal and development discussion. Appraisal was often mentioned by the organisational respondent as a significant management development tool, but was rarely mentioned by individual directors as having been influential on their development. Clearly,

many had not been appraised, even in organisations where it had been supposed to happen for many years.

The most significant weakness is a failure to secure the commitment of individual directors to their own development. The fact that few of them recognise any careful plan in their own career (although in some cases they felt that it began to happen perhaps at the level immediately before the Board) showed two possible weaknesses. Either a system does not provide for such discussion, in which case the system can scarcely be effective, for secret plans for unstated development seem unlikely to be fully successful. Alternatively, the system fails because discussion and commitment are implied or explicit in the statements about it but in fact are not carried out by participants in the system.

Past failures in the system are compounded in the present. Many of the directors we saw recognised that development needs and processes did not finish when they arrived on the Main Board. Yet the use of appraisal or any formal review with directors was rare. Some of them at least actually desired some formal process for discussion with the Chief Executive.

Are Present Systems Sufficient?

All of this is to measure the system in the terms set implicitly (though not explicitly) by the content of the systems themselves. If we move beyond those statements on what the system thought it was intended to achieve and look instead at what the system might have provided, the picture is even more bleak. Although we found one organisation which explicitly mentioned the fact that experience on the job was the normal and most frequent form of management development, we found no system which gave any significant help in this. The direct processes of helping managers to learn from on-the-job experiences through (for example) projects, mentors, coaching and reviewing development experiences on the job, were largely omitted from the formal schemes discussed with us and from the materials shown to us. Therefore, not only do the systems often fail to work even in their own terms, but they often fail to work as systems because they are incomplete, and moreover incomplete in the areas of most crucial concern to managers, i.e. learning from normal work experience.

Individual Experiences in Development

For most directors, development was a responsive and reactive experience due to circumstances or to an intervention by someone else, rather than a proactive process. In addition, the characteristic picture for most of them was that they had been exposed to a very limited range of management development processes. A common experience was that they might have experienced three out of a possible range of 12 development processes.

Perhaps of particular significance, in view of the attention paid in management development literature over the last ten years or so, were the comments made about coaching, counselling and projects. Very few could recollect any experience of coaching or counselling except perhaps in very early days, even where appraisal systems had been in operation for many years. Nor had more recently identified

experiences apparently been of great significance. What had been of significance was a range of experiences centred on the job, but not usually recognised as development experiences at the time. Indeed, it very often seemed to be the case that only in our discussion did directors recognise some of the development experiences they had had. It was clearly the case (and we were not surprised by this) that most directors were substantially unaware of learning and development as processes at all. For example, very few of them recognised "modelling" as a major experience in their lives, although it is often quoted in the literature as being a most powerful experience.

Unawareness of the fact that a task often included a learning experience was constantly encountered. Most managers had not perceived a particular task activity as a development opportunity before they entered into it, and most of them did not recognise it as a development opportunity while it was going on. Many quoted significant projects as having been crucial learning experiences for them. This was, however, not something identified with them beforehand, discussed with them during the project, or reviewed with them subsequently. Yet many of our interviewees were now able to see that such opportunities had been lost unnecessarily and that something could be done about them in the future.

The range of experiences from which managers had actually learned was fascinating and important, even though flawed from a learning point of view in that they had often simply failed to get as much out of the experience as they might have done. The cross-check we were able to establish by asking about both possible formal inputs to their learning and about their actual job experiences, and how far these had contributed to their development, was the main contributor to building up our concept of a new type of management development, as I will show later.

Very few managers said they had ever been exposed to formal coaching. We described this as an experienced manager taking a less experienced manager through a particular situation or problem and helping him/her to tackle it better through an overt process of guiding his/her attention to the main issues and possible solutions. If managers had encountered this at all, it was in their very junior days.

Type 1 — Model of Management Development

In our new Model of Management Development, we describe these informal accidental experiences, not identified as learning, as Type 1 Management Development. We thought it unlikely that the learning process itself would ever have been discussed with the directors we saw, and on this we were proved right. We also thought it probable that one of the influences on how a manager has learned would be the fact that some managers like learning in one way and others dislike that particular process. In addition to the comments made by directors in discussion with us, we were able to use my Learning Styles Questionnaire[6] as a further test on this proposition. The two types of evidence supported the view that some managers had responded well, and others badly to the same kind of management development process. A substantial part of the reason could be identified as their preferred style of learning.

A "Type 1" Case

A number of managers had encountered what we describe as mutual problem solving. The reality of management as they experienced it, was that they would have a problem which was exposed to them. The problem was debated, analysed, options were considered, solutions identified and finally a decision taken. All this was seen as a normal and frequent managerial process. Looking back on it, directors were now able to see that it was a process from which they had learned something, but as most of them said, learning was not an objective, either for themselves or for the boss. Thus, the formal management development process, coaching, was dismissed as an infrequent and frankly unreal process. What directors saw as the reality, they now also recognised as "learning from experience".

A New Model of Management Development

It is quite possible to list reasons (as we have done in the main report) for the success or failure of formal schemes of management development, and thereby indicate how the chances of success can be enhanced. While those lists are likely to be helpful, they do not provide new concepts about management development. It is, however, the substantial conclusion of our work that such a new concept is, in fact, necessary. We actually need to revise the understanding of managers and management development specialists alike about the nature of management development itself.

Hitherto, there have really been two significantly different schools of thought. One school of thought, managers themselves, has seen development as essentially a process of "learning from experience" in which exposure to a variety of levels and types of job over a number of years will, for those who are successful in meeting job targets, produce a successful director. They pay little regard to the planning of development and even less to off-the-job activities such as courses. The lack of probability of such processes actually producing directors of the right quality, and the logical incompatibility within sophisticated organisations of planning financial and material resources in detail while ignoring the most important resource, the managers, had led to the attempt to introduce formal management development schemes. These latter are Type 3 Management Development.

The conclusions we drew from our report are that informal processes are inevitable, formal processes are necessary, but that neither, in isolation, is sufficient. The evidence from directors themselves showed how inefficient the processes of learning and job experience can be, and how unnecessarily inefficient they are. Highly planned and structured processes and experiences can, however, also fail, partly through neglecting to attend to the right issues and partly through a lack of interest in the messy and chaotic reality of managerial life. It is understandable that management development advisers and personnel directors often concentrate on those aspects of management development which they feel able to influence. It is unfortunate that they then talk about these aspects as if they were the only and, indeed, the most important parts of management development.

One example of a management activity frequently identified in our discussion will illustrate all three Types, and the model is shown in Figure 1.

Type 1. "Informal Managerial" — Accidental Processes	
Characteristics	— occur within managerial activities — explicit intention is task performance — no clear development objectives — unstructured in development terms — not planned in advance — owned by managers
Development consequences	— learning is real, direct, unconscious insufficient

Type 2 "Integrated Managerial" — Opportunistic Processes	
Characteristics	— occur within managerial activities — explicit intention both task performance and development — clear development objectives — structured for development by boss and subordinate — planned beforehand or reviewed subsequently as learning experiences — owned by managers
Development consequences	— learning is real, direct, conscious, more substantial

Type 3 "Formal Management Development" — Planned Processes	
Characteristics	— often away from normal managerial activities — explicit intention is development — clear development objectives — structured for development by developers — planned beforehand and reviewed subsequently as learning experiences — owned more by developers than managers
Development consequences	— learning may be real (through a job) or detached (through a course) — is more likely to be conscious, relatively infrequent

Figure 1.
Model of Types of Management Development

Three-stage Learning from Projects

Most managers have had the experience of working on a project, within or sometimes outside their current job responsibilities. The participation of the manager is usually decided without any reference to personal development, with no discussion of development objectives. It is purely a managerial task. Subsequently, managers may recognise that they learned from the project. "It was the first time I dealt directly with a major supplier, and it taught me that if I did not set some targets he would take over." Learning of this kind is frequent, but loose, insufficiently tested and often not related to other learning experiences. It is Type 1 Management Development.

Some managers have had the useful experience of working on a real project through a defined management programme. They may have done it through (for example) a Diploma in Management Studies, or through an Action Learning Set, or through a project set during a management training course. Here, the main purpose of the project is management development, with different levels of managerial accountability and utility from the project itself. This is Type 3 Management Development.

In our view, the distance between these two types of learning from a project is unnecessary. In between, there can be a process which, while responding to "normal" management decisions about project participation, squeezes learning from the participation more effectively. The project remains primarily a management activity, and is not sponsored as a management development activity. Boss and subordinate, however, agree to some development opportunities and objectives likely to arise during the project, and to review learning experiences during and at the end of it. The "best" bosses, and the most aware subordinates, already do this. It is a process which could be taken up by many more without a major intervention in terms of time or disruption of their perception of reality: "The job is the main thing." It remains within the manager's domain, and is not taken into the formal management development process. This is our new Type 2 Management Development.

A "Type 2" Case

An example of this is taken from a comment by a manager:

> I tend to have two agendas at the start of each working day. One is written down and consists of a list of meetings, and probably tasks that I need to achieve during the day. The other list I sometimes write down, but more often keep in my mind. This is a list of things I want to achieve during the meeting or through the achievement of the task. It is usually too time-consuming to write these down, but I have them in mind. At the end of most days, I review how well I have done. I look as objectively as I can at what I have achieved and what my contribution has been (as well as that of others) to success or failure on things I set out to achieve. Again, I do not do this very formally. I often do it in the train going home, or in the car if someone else is driving me. I sometimes do it over a drink in the evening or when I am gardening or riding at the weekend.

Conclusion

One other type of contribution to our analyses should be added here. The new concept — Type 2 — is fundamentally significant, because it pulls together two aspects of the reality of management life. The first, which I have emphasised already, is the need to get better value from real managerial experiences by squeezing them for at least some better organised development benefit. That has been the case developed from our data from the survey.

The second contribution deals with the other aspects of the reality of managerial life. It so happens that the most significant analyses of what senior executives do both come from work done in the US. However, when the work of Kotter[7] and Mintzberg[8] is placed alongside that of Rosemary Stewart[9] in the UK, it will be seen that our proposal fits into the best analysis available of what top executives actually do and how they do it. That reality is quite different from old prescriptions about management from the so-called classical theorists. Managerial life is hectic, relatively disorganised, unplanned and subject to sudden crises.

Effective management development ought to take account of that fact in two ways. First, the actual content of management development processes ought to be designed to enable managers to manage that reality better. It ought to enable managers to identify and use the network which enables them to get things done; it ought to show them how to use more efficiently the discontinuous, short-time focus activities which are so much a part of managerial life. In addition, in terms of the concept advanced in this article, the management development process (as distinct from management development content) ought to address the same realities. It ought to deal with the fact of short-term thinking, lack of organised planning and take advantage of the fact that managers actually do pay attention to a number of issues apparently at the same time. It ought to do these things rather than run away from them in the direction of trying to encompass everything in formal well-planned management development activities, which, though significant on some occasions, will not encounter the most frequent realities of managerial life.

Alan Mumford's new book[10] spells out how ideas in this article can be implemented.

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Managerial Linking Skills

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Introduction

Why do some teams work effectively and others not? All managers are accountable for the development and co-ordination of their team and yet many managers have considerable difficulty in getting their team to work at a high performance level. As part of our research on the factors influencing High Performing Teams we have found that the role of the manager as a co-ordinator and integrator is crucial to the success of the team.

Team Leadership

Team leaders in a work situation are judged every day by the members of their own team. The performance of the team leader is continually under scrutiny by the people who know best how he/she is doing the job. The team members are usually well aware of whether their leader is performing or not. Successful or High Performing Teams (HPTs) have leaders that not only perform well themselves but enable team members to do so.

Our research into High Performing teams has shown that there are three major areas which all team leaders need to concentrate on. These are example, experience, and expertise. We have referred to them as the *three es* as a convenient way of explaining the issues involved.

Managing by Example

As a manager, you are in a situation where the team can assess what you do and judge its effectiveness. One way in which this is done is to see whether you provide an *example* to the other members of the team. The importance of setting an example ranges from quick, off-the-cuff, comments, through to the planned activities.

Staff members will note what time you turn up for work and what time you leave. This is one way in which they take the cue from the manager as to what is expected and accepted. The manager in turning up for work and leaving at a particular time is setting an example. If you continually arrive after other people and leave before them, then this will be taken as an example of what is the norm and other people will eventually do what you do. If, however, you set an example by being early and when necessary, being prepared to work late to complete jobs, then this will also be a cue to other members in terms of what the expectations are.

Examples, however, can emerge from relatively simple situations. For example, if you lose your temper, this may well be seen as an example of "not practising

what you preach''. Alternatively, the manager who goes out of his/her way to listen and take time to deal with particular problems raised by individuals may well be giving the example that other people can then follow in order to cope with many of the difficult situations that arise at work.

The manager in setting an example, whether it be good or bad, is acting as a role model. Increasingly people look towards managers, not as sources of authority but as people who gain respect through the example that they set. Our work with groups suggests that managers cannot be excellent at all aspects of the team task and therefore need to be clear as to the key areas within which they set examples. We shall look at this as part of a new approach to team management.

Managing by Experience

All managers are judged by their team colleagues in terms of the experience they bring to bear on a particular task. It is often difficult to weigh and judge experience. It is one of the key aspects of any contribution to a team which can be only judged through the practical application of skill when a problem arises.

Leaders who talk a lot about their experience are often criticised. Those who illustrate their experience through practice are more usually respected. To gain experience a manager needs to have spent sufficient time in various roles gathering necessary information and understanding the various work processes. One example was brought to our attention of a mining engineer who qualified at university and insisted that he spend over two years underground working at the coal face. This was not necessary, according to regulations, but he felt it was essential experience before doing the job of a mine manager, which was his ambition.

Colleagues will assess one's experience, not in terms of theory but in terms of practice on the job. It is important that leaders gain experience in different roles so they can gather sufficient experience and the respect of those in their team.

In our research with chief executives, they indicated that anyone who was going to reach the highest level of seniority in their organisation needed to gain wide experience in many functions prior to the age of 35[1,2]. There is no doubt therefore in our view that successful team management depends on moving between functions and, indeed, roles to gather the necessary experience.

Managing by Expertise

In the modern, professional world of work, the need for particular knowledge and skill is a prime prerequisite of any manager. The old traditional method of working one's way up from the shop floor, based solely on practical experience, is no longer sufficient. Today we require people who have gathered knowledge and skill and learnt how to apply them to practical problems and opportunities that arise.

Increasingly, the manager of today has a degree, whether it be in sciences, technology, the arts, or the humanities. Increasingly we are moving towards a managerial stratum which will be qualified to tertiary-level standard. They will therefore not accept low educational standards in the people they select. Moreover, they will press for further personal development in order to sustain and maintain their own expertise. This will determine to a considerable degree the way they

manage and develop their own teams. Increasingly this means more and more managers having a management qualification, either through a Master of Business Administration degree or a professional qualification.

Making Teams Work

Our work examining the performance of managers who lead High Performing Teams shows that they must apply their example, experience and expertise, to developing an effective working group. In short, it is no use for a manager to set an example, have a wide experience and be knowledgeable, if they cannot motivate, guide and lead a team of people. An essential aspect of this involves understanding the work that a team has to do and being able to select and allocate team members to do the work.

As one manager has said to us: "Team leadership involves understanding the work that has to be done and, even more important, understanding how to get the people to do it." Our research work on team management has provided a framework within which managers can begin to make such choices. A key aspect of this has been the identification of some of the key elements in the work situations that managers must manage. They are:

Area	Work Function
(1) The generation of information relevant to the task	Advising
(2) The identification of ideas and innovations which can improve the way the task is done	Innovating
(3) The persuasion of others and exploration of how people and resources can be gained to do the task	Promoting
(4) The development and assessment of practical methods for doing the task	Developing
(5) The organisation and implementation of particular systems and methods to get the task under way	Organising
(6) The regular production and output of the task to a set plan and standard	Producing
(7) The detailed inspection and monitoring of the task to established standards and regulations	Inspecting
(8) The maintenance of physical and social resources to ensure that the task is done according to established principles and practices.	Maintaining

The Manager as a Team Linker

Holding all of these work tasks together, is the key work process which we call *linking*. This involves the integration of work effort between members of the team. Successful teams have a person who acts as a linker. This is usually the manager, although, in some teams, this work is shared with others.

All of the work functions mentioned are critical to the success of any team effort. Irrespective of whether the team is involved in research, sales, marketing, production or any other kind of work, it is vital that each one of the above functions is managed and properly carried out. From our experience, however, we have found that no one person can adequately do all of the above functions. Indeed, most people we have found have a preference for doing two or three of the work areas well and are prepared to contribute to the others.

However, it is critical that every work team has someone who can perform the linking role—the co-ordinating and integrating of others. Clearly this linking role is therefore central to managerial work. In practice, however, a number of people appointed to managerial work have difficulty in becoming effective linkers. They may perform many of the other functions we have mentioned, such as "controlling", "developing", "maintaining" or "innovating" well, but do not link the team together.

What therefore does a linker do? A key task is to be the centre point of the team. All teams need a reference point for information and guidance. The manager who is linking well will do this. This will mean the manager will call on experience, expertise, and most of all, give an example of what is expected.

To be an effective linker, a manager needs to develop the skills of linking. These are listed below.

Skills of Linking	
1	Listen before deciding
2.	Keep team members up to date on a regular basis
3	Be available and responsive to people's problems
4	Develop a balanced team of Advisers, Organisers, Controllers, and Explorers (refer to section on "Team Work and Team Roles")
5	Allocate work to people, based on their capabilities
6	Encourage respect and understanding amongst team members
7	Delegate work which is not essential for you to do
8	Set an example and agree high quality standards with the team
9	Set achievable targets for the team but always press them for improved performance
10	Co-ordinate and represent team members
11	Involve team members in the problem solving of key issues

The manager who can develop skills in linking and show by example that he/she knows how to use them on a regular basis will have established a base for building a High Performing Team.

Team Work and Team Roles

In order for managers to have confidence in the linking role, it is important that they have a clear idea of what people can do. This can come from personal observation and experience of an individual's work. However, it is helpful if

High Work, Low Linking

At the age of twenty-eight, Bob Collins became the engineer and manager of a production company. He was conscious of the need to bring together a team to ensure success He therefore set an example by coming into work before they did. He was confident of his technical ability for he was well qualified, although his experience was limited to the one company for which he had worked. He had nevertheless visited many other organisations and different industries to widen his perspective.

Initially Bob Collins turned out to be an expert in all these functions He raced from one job to another There never seemed to be enough hours in the day. He would go home feeling worn out •

He found himself working weekends and having little time for his family His wife criticised him saying he spent more time at work than he did at home Indeed, the harder Bob Collins worked, the more he felt he had to do It seemed a never-ending circle

Bob Collins had not learnt to delegate Indeed, he did not know what the key strengths of his team were He had never sat down to analyse what he was good at and what other people in the team were skilled at doing He believed that he had to be the expert in all of the work functions

One day while leading a meeting, one of his colleagues said to him, "Leave that to us, Bob We can deal with that matter." Bob felt uneasy because unless he had personal involvement in the matter, he was concerned that the job might not be done to his high standard. However, he felt that if he interfered, this would get in the way of the people who had volunteered to take the matter on He therefore agreed and went home rather worried. Bob Collins had not yet learned the art of how to manage a team He was still trying to do all the jobs himself and reluctant to delegate.

He was certainly working hard, but he had not learnt how to be a managerial linker

managers have, in addition, some principles which will guide them in assessing people's potential contribution to a work team. If people have particular strengths in certain areas, it is wise to identify these as early as possible, rather than have people confined to areas which do not reflect their real capability.

The *Team Management Index*, provides clear guidelines for managers on how to assess the work strengths of their team members. We have found that when managers and their team members complete the Index and discuss the results, it provides a framework within which they can work together more effectively. It becomes, therefore, the basis for a team-building exercise.

A key aspect of the Index is that it enables people to look at their particular role preferences in a team. Our research shows that there are five major work activities that all teams have to manage. These are exploring, controlling, advising, organising and linking. These are set out in the Team Management Activities model in Figure 1.

At the heart of every team, as indicated, is the ***linking*** activity. The successful manager will develop the ability to co-ordinate and integrate the work of other people. Those who do not will find that their team will not perform at a high level and will eventually disintegrate into a series of individual activities.

The *advising* and *organising* activities define opposite ends of a role function "continuum". The advisory role in a team invariably relates to gathering information, planning and the creation of ideas. At the opposite side is the organising function which concentrates more on implementation of decisions, the setting up of systems

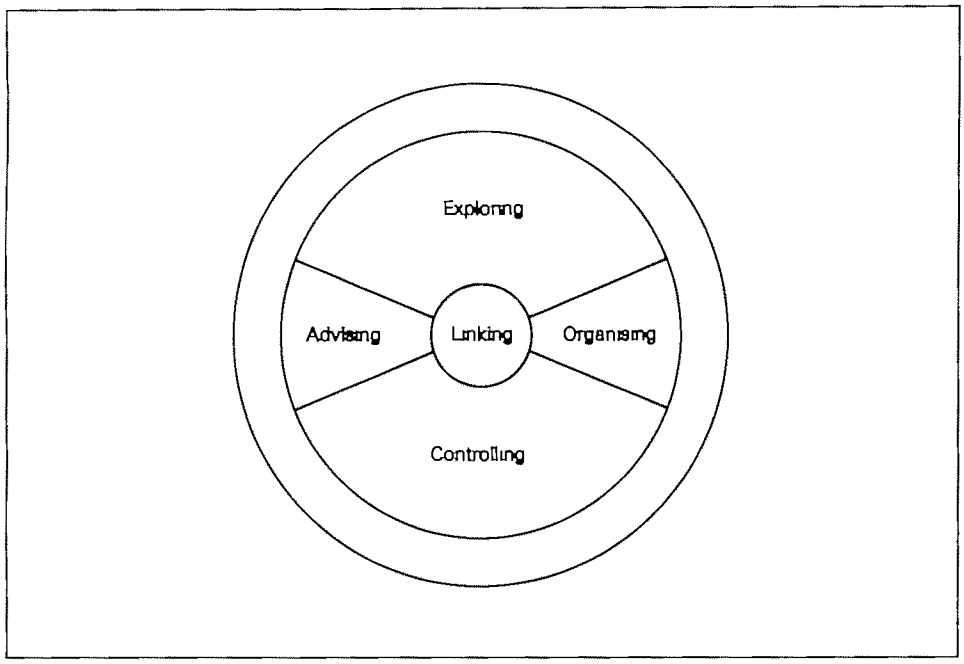


Figure 1.
Key Activities in Team Management

and procedures, and the establishment of time deadlines, with the emphasis on action. Some people enjoy this sharp-ended role; others prefer to stand back and take more time, and therefore they will usually prefer more of an advisory role.

The other aspects of any active team must relate to the behaviour that people engage in. The model illustrates this is so far as it identifies two key behaviour activities. Those people who prefer *controlling* will put a heavy emphasis on setting standards, detailing specifications, achieving outputs in a neat and orderly way, and essentially making sure that the team works according to a pre-set plan of action. In contrast, *exploring* people like to go beyond the *status quo*. They will enjoy looking for new opportunities and bringing into the organisation new ways of doing things. The challenge to them is to change the way things are done, rather than just to reproduce the traditional pattern of working. This, of course, may conflict from time to time with those people who wish to control things in an orderly and well-established way.

Identifying Key Team Roles

A key aspect of developing any team is to structure the work and allocate the best people to the jobs that have to be done. No one person can do all of the work in a team. Indeed, that is the reason for having a team in the first place, so that the work can be shared rather than falling on one person. The task of the manager is to make sure that the members of the team cover the work rather than having unbalanced work-loads, with some people having far too much to do and others with too little.

One way of looking at this is to identify the work roles that are needed, and then to assign people with particular interests and skills in that area to that particular work.

We have been able to characterise all the major work roles in a team or an organisation by an expanded version of our earlier Team Activities model. This new model, known as the Team Management Wheel (see Figure 2), identifies nine major roles which should be covered in any team. These roles are similar in some respects to the work of Belbin[4], but our model also seeks to provide a basis for self-understanding as well as for team work.

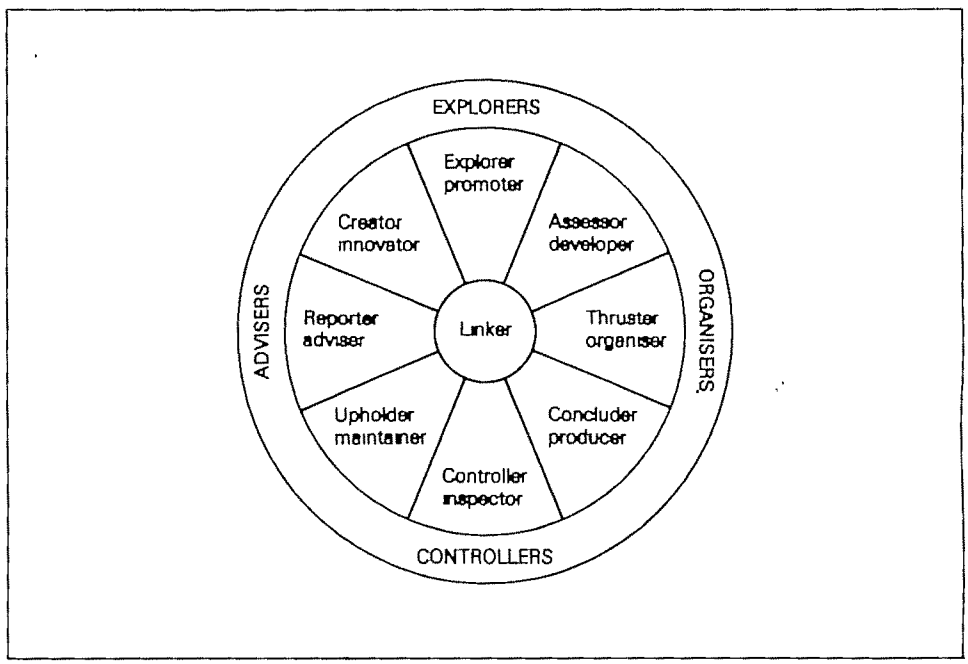


Figure 2.
Team Management Wheel

Because there are nine roles identified, it does not mean that there have to be nine people in every team. Indeed, normally, each person is capable of playing up to two or three of the roles identified. However, individuals are unlikely to be able to do all nine with the same level of skill. Therefore it is best if people concentrate on what they are good at.

Let us therefore look at some of these roles and identify what they mean.

Reporter-Advisers

Reporter-Advisers are good at generating information and gathering it together in such a way that it can be understood. Such people are usually patient, and prepared to hold off making a decision until they know as much as they can about the work to be done. Some people may feel that they procrastinate and put things off. However, to the Reporter-Adviser it is better to be accurate rather than putting forward advice which later was seen to be in error. Such people are invaluable as

"support" members of the team, but they are not likely to be the people who will be impatient enough to get things organised. Indeed, their concern is to make sure that the job is done correctly.

Creator-Innovators

Creator-Innovators are people who have a number of ideas which may well contradict and upset the existing way of doing things. Such people can be very independent and wish to experiment and pursue their ideas regardless of the present systems and methods. They therefore need to be treated in such a way that they can pursue their ideas without disrupting the present way of working until their new approaches have been proved. Many organisations therefore set up research and development units (often separated from the production units) to allow people who have the ideas to see if they can come to fruition. However, on *every* team, it is important to have people who are more idea orientated to give them an opportunity to talk through their views, even though it may seem at the time to be disturbing the existing way of operating.

Explorer-Promoters

Explorer-Promoters are usually excellent at taking up an idea and getting people enthusiastic about it. They will go out and find what is happening outside of the organisation and compare new ideas with what is being done by other people. They are also good at bringing back contacts, information and resources which can help the innovation move forward. They may not necessarily be good at controlling details, but they are excellent at seeing the wide picture and developing an enthusiasm amongst other people for an innovation. They are very capable in pushing an idea forward, even if they are not always the best people to organise and control it.

Assessor-Developers

Assessor-Developers are different, in that they will look for ways and means in which an idea can work in a practical way. Their concern is to see if the market wants the innovation and they will therefore test it against some practical criteria. Very often, they will produce a prototype or do a market research study. Their whole interest is in developing an innovation to the point where it can work. However, once they have done this, they will probably not be interested in producing it on a regular basis. Instead, they prefer to move off and look at another project which they can assess.

Thruster-Organisers

Thruster-Organisers are the people who will get things done. Once they have been convinced that the "idea" is of relevance, they will set up procedures and systems and make the task into a work reality. They will push people and systems to ensure that deadlines can be met. They can be extremely impatient, but essentially they get things done even if it does mean that on the way certain "feathers are ruffled".

Concluder-Producers

Concluder-Producers take a great pride in producing a product or service to a standard. They will do this on a regular basis and feel that their work is fulfilled if their quotas and plans are met. Indeed, they like working to set procedures and doing things in a regular way. The fact that they produced something yesterday does not mean that they will be bored with producing it tomorrow. This stands in contrast to the Creator-Innovators who dislike doing similar things day after day and want the variety and challenge of doing things differently. The important thing is to use one's existing skills rather than continually changing and learning new ways of doing things. They therefore enjoy reproducing things and achieving the plans that they set.

Controller-Inspectors

Controller-Inspectors are people who enjoy doing detailed work and making sure that the facts and figures are correct. They will be careful and meticulous. Indeed, one of their great strengths is that they concentrate for long periods of time on a particular task. This contrasts with the Explorer-Promoter who continually needs a wide variety of tasks. In contrast, the Controller-Inspector wishes to pursue something in depth and make sure that the work is done according to plan in an accurate way. They are extremely valuable in financial and quality issues.

Upholder-Maintainers

Upholder-Maintainers are very good at making sure the team has a sound basis for operations. They take pride in maintaining both the physical side of work and the social side. Such people can very well become the "conscience" of the team and provide a lot of support and help to team members. They usually have strong views on the way the team should be run, based on their convictions and beliefs. If these are upset, such people can become rather obstinate and difficult. However, when they believe in what the team is doing, they can become a tremendous source of strength and energy, and often make excellent negotiators.

Linkers

In the middle of all these work functions are the *Linkers*. These are people who map close to the centre of the wheel and therefore have considerable co-ordinating abilities. All of the other roles that we have mentioned also involve some aspect of linking, but people close to the centre of the wheel are more able to co-ordinate and integrate the work of others. Managers should look towards developing linking skills, whatever the key strength they have in the other roles that we have mentioned. However, not all managers find linking easy. They therefore need to have someone on their team who can perform this role. However, on many occasions, the manager needs to make a conscious effort to get to the "hub" of the wheel, otherwise the team will begin to disintegrate. The skills of linking can be learnt and developed through practice.

Managing People at Work

It is with an understanding of the way in which people prefer to work in particular roles that we can make sure that the team works effectively. As in any sports

Case Example Team Role Discussion

In working with a number of large coal companies it was decided that the mine supervisors should have the opportunity to meet and consider managerial problems The supervisors, who reported to the respective mine managers, indicated their major problems lay in developing an effective working team

Each supervisor completed the Team Management Index and received a role profile document outlining his major team role preference There was general agreement that the feedback was useful and relevant Discussions took place on how these data could be used within the work place.

Two months later, at the follow-up meeting, the supervisors reported back on how they had applied the ideas they had learnt, and, in particular, the use of the role profiles Most had initiated a discussion with their team, and in many cases their boss, on their own role profile and then they explained the various team roles. This, in turn, had led to discussions on how to improve team performance through improved work allocation and organisation changes. A key issue, however, was that the supervisors reported they had gained a lot of helpful feedback on how to improve their own approach to leadership as well as how to improve the team

team, it would be inappropriate just to have forwards and no defence. So, in a managerial team, it is inappropriate to have controllers and no explorers, or organisers and no advisers. There must be a balance in each team to ensure that all of the work functions are covered.

The manager, of course, will need to spend time ensuring this balance is achieved, by co-ordinating and integrating the work of team members as well as performing one or more of the other work functions. As one manager said, "The most difficult part of becoming a manager for me was to stop being an individualist concerned with technical details and to be concerned with the organisational problems of managing others." All managers have difficulty in making the transition from the technical to the managerial function. However, we believe through our understanding of the types of work functions and the associated work roles, this can be done in such a way that the manager is not overworked. All managers can avoid becoming a "Bob Collins".

The effective manager will therefore be able to act as a ***linker*** by spending time talking to members of the team, communicating what is required, and giving them guidance. The effective manager will bring people together, both formally and informally, to ensure that they pull in the same direction. In doing this, they will be setting the example which is essential for success.

However, it is important in such a "linking" activity that the manager builds upon the three Es provided by the team members. He/she must enable other members of the team to communicate by example, expertise and experience. The manager must therefore become very skilled in the interpersonal aspects of work and be able to gain the confidence of team members.

That is easier said than done but we believe that by building upon the principles involved in team management, managers can learn not only how to do their own work, but how to allocate and delegate work to others in such a way that the results of the team are greater than the sum of the individual members.

High Performing Teams

We mentioned earlier the concept of High Performing Teams (HPTs). It may be useful if we list below the major points emerging from our research in this area:

Characteristics of High Performing Teams

1. High Performing Teams have at least one Linker as a key team member
2. High Performing Teams set high output, high-quality targets and regularly achieve them
3. High Performing Teams gain a high degree of job satisfaction from their work
4. Team members of High Performing Teams co-operate well with one another
5. The managers of High Performing Teams are well respected by the members for the example they set
6. High Performing Teams are well balanced with respect to the roles people play in relation to their skills
7. High Performing Teams have a high degree of autonomy
8. High Performing Teams learn quickly from their mistakes
9. High Performing Teams seek to be client orientated
10. High Performing Teams have high problem-solving skills and regularly review their performance
11. High Performing Teams are motivated

Each one of these factors is important in establishing and managing a High Performing Team. In this article, we have concentrated on Points 1, 5 and 6. However, for a team to be rated as a "HPT", all the above factors must be present.

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Achieving the Capacity and Competence to Manage

by
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Introduction

The importance of a career today is taken for granted, just as acquiring a trade was taken for granted in the days when craftsmanship was the basis for securing lifetime employment in a prestigious role. The concept of a career now goes well beyond the original legal, medical, educational and religious professional careers which were the major professional roles prior to the emergence of modern industrial commercial organisations.

Today when there are a vast number of people in universities and colleges acquiring qualifications in everything from accounting through to zoology, there is tremendous pressure for the development of a wider base for career mobility. The major focus for this pressure is the work situation, and, in particular, the medium and large industrial and commercial organisations, together with public service organisations.

People who have acquired qualifications and skills in a particular area want to go on and use these and acquire roles that facilitate this. However, alongside this are the organisational problems of co-ordination and management. This brings to the fore different aspects of career work from the original technical specialisation in which a person qualifies. Therefore, in developing a career, many people have to look at the extent to which they pursue particular roles which concentrate more on administrative and managerial roles rather than their original specialisation.

The concept of the managerial career, in contrast to the craft and technical career has become established only over the last 20-30 years. The predominance of the managerial role in terms of the status and rewards associated has, however, overshadowed the other equally important career roles in industrial and commercial organisations.

In this article, the concentration will be on career roles related to organisational levels and performance criteria. Van Maanen and Schein have argued that we should indeed examine "the person within the total life space and throughout his lifetime"[1]. It is important to identify the different career roles people can play in the modern organisation and the transitions that need to be made for success at the different levels.

Executive Career Paths and Positions

A number of approaches have been taken in the literature to the study of careers and career development. Several theories exist which explain careers in terms

of life cycle stages [2,3,4,5]. Within such a total approach, Schein has "identified" three distinct forms of models: biosocial life cycles, family-procreation cycles and work-career cycles. Within this last group, the focus of attention becomes the stages through which managers move as they pursue an organisational career[6,7,8].

A useful career concept model has been developed by Driver who postulates that individuals have one of four basic approaches to their organisational careers and personal development — transitory, steady state, linear or spiral. Driver has drawn on Schein's "career anchor" scheme of career motivation to develop further an active-passive sub-type within each major career concept type.

In light of previous research[9,10,11] it is useful to see careers as a set of experiences. These are shown in Figure 1. They are not necessarily sequential, but usually a person building an executive career would proceed in a linear fashion through each level of experience until he/she reached his/her peak.

It would appear there are at least eight major stages of experience that people who are involved in a senior managerial career can go through. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

Each person has a different career line. For example, the person who is a foreman in a factory will have spent the first few years of his working life doing an apprenticeship and then probably another five-ten years working on the tools, before becoming a team leader. It is at this level that most people with such operational skills level out in terms of career moves.

The pathway to senior management, however, today requires more and more qualifications.Many people who will go on to senior management will, in fact, be in some form of full-time or part-time technical training well into their 20s. However, once they obtain their first team leadership experience, this is but the first stage of a number of possible leadership roles that they can take.

Having led a team in one particular area at level 4, they will have to lead a group of people from different disciplines and functions. Therefore, in the factory context, a manager may move from being the manager of engineers to being the factory or works manager in which he has personnel, production, maintenance and possibly warehousing and distribution reporting to him.

Beyond this, at level 5 comes the responsibility of running part of the business where there is a direct profit and loss responsibility. This involves not only managing people from different functions, but taking on the critical task of ensuring that the organisation survives. This clearly involves much more complicated planning and wider managerial skills.

At this level, the individual may not actually be the chief executive in control of the company. However, he/she will be at the equivalent of a Director/Vice-President level. They may not actually have the title, but they will be performing many of the tasks associated with people at that level.

The profit and loss level of experience is the precursor for wider managerial responsibilities. These I have called the Director Leadership experience. People at this level develop and make overall policy for the organisation, while usually having day-to-day operating executive responsibilities as well. However, one of the ironies is that people can reach level 5 without having profit and loss level

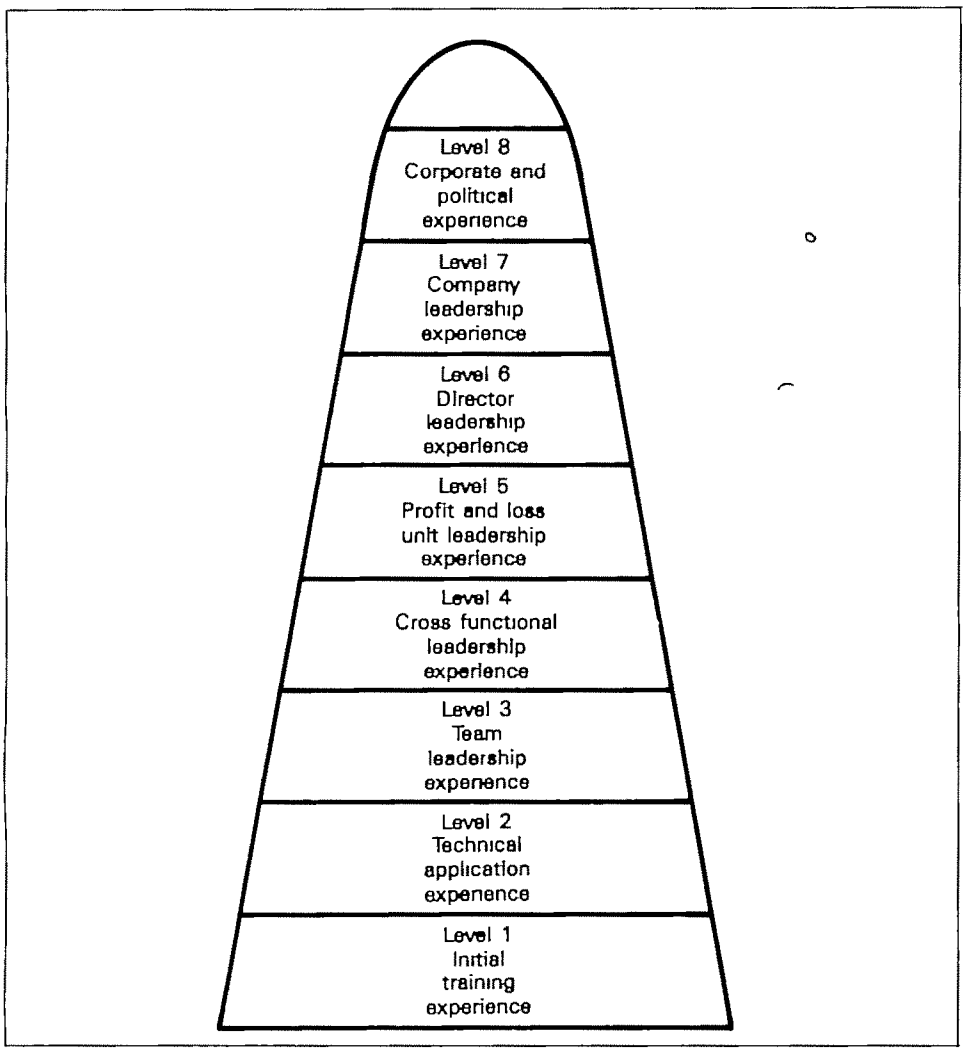


Figure 1.
Levels of Experience in Career Development

experience. In my view, this is a major weakness in career development. For example, the accountant who then becomes the Finance Director does not always have profit and loss level experience. This invariably means that such a person probably has a somewhat narrow view of the overall business.

Beyond this, at level 7, for the successful executive, there is the move to running a totally integrated company. This may be a subsidiary of a much larger company. There is an increasing trend amongst large organisations to break down their total business into smaller business units for economic and industrial relations reasons. This process provides greater opportunities for executive development. Thus it is possible for an executive to have level 7 experience with a small subsidiary of a larger organisation. This is usually an invaluable form of management development.

From our research[9], the person who is reaching senior level achieves the position of chief executive of a subsidiary company on average by the age of 41. If successful at this, he/she will eventually have the possibility of rising to level 8 which is at corporate headquarters. At this level the task is to think through the strategy and plans for integrating the work of the various individual companies and allowing them sufficient autonomy but within clear financial and policy guidelines.

For the person who really makes it to the top, there are the key representative roles which come with being the senior statesman of the organisation. This usually involves representing the company to ensure that the key political interests are promoted and defended. This role can be reserved for the Chairman/President or can be combined with the chief executive role.

Managerial Roles and Careers

The above analysis concentrates on executive or managerial careers. In reality, however, careers in organisations fall into a range of different categories and these need to be recognised within the levels mentioned.

Careers according to Hall[5] are "the individually perceived sequence of behaviours associated with work related experiences and activities over the span of the person's life". However, these activities take place through recognised professional bodies and in employing organisations based on particular roles. The significance of roles at the general level of the organisation has been well documented[12]. In the career context Louis has developed a typology of career transitions, comprising two major categories — inter-role and intra-role transitions.

Concern has been raised at the extent to which modern organisations force people to leave their technical specialisation in order to get promotion within the organisation and the reasons for this[13,14,15,16,17]. While financial rewards and higher status may result, they are often achieved at the expense not only of a person's original career interest, but also of individual and organisational performance [18,19].

A key aspect of this process is the relationship of technical to managerial work. While each person has a personal career line there is an overall trend which can be seen in the model in Figure 2)

When a person starts in the work force it is usually in jobs at levels 1 and 2 which are primarily technical. Gradually, the person who is successful is asked to take on more responsibility. This usually involves supervising the work of other people, and therefore involvement in the process of management is initiated. More time is spent at level 3 in allocating and delegating work, reviewing that work, sitting on committees, ordering resources, budgeting and the various other tasks associated with management. There is for many, therefore, a major role transition from a technical job to a managerial job, in terms of the time spent, although clearly the technical background knowledge and experience is usually essential to do the managerial task. Nevertheless as the role of senior managers has only been examined in depth recently[20,21,22], the task of explaining the personal processes of such role transitions is not fully understood.

In looking at this process we need to examine the key factors that should be used to assess career progress at both the technical and managerial levels.

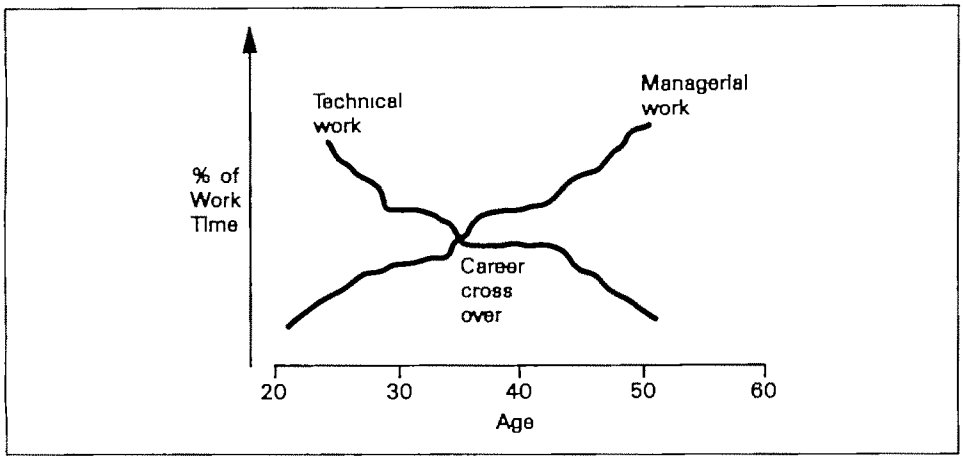


Figure 2.

As the tradition of long service, loyalty and the gradual evolution to a senior executive position in Western industrial organisations has declined, an increasing emphasis has been placed on performance review and appraisal. The essential aim of performance appraisal has been to assess people on their merit and ensure that promotions and pay reviews are related to a review of performance against agreed criteria. Alongside this has emerged the assessment centre method [22,24], for identifying in particular those with executive potential. These trends reflect the increasing competitiveness of organisational life.

In addition to these developments are a number of organisationally orientated problems which have a direct bearing on the development of careers. Van Maanen[15] identifies areas of concern such as the changing values relating to work life and leisure, alienation from work, reduced organisational effectiveness and lack of understanding of adult identity and development.

Too often, however, the study of careers concentrates exclusively on the managerial or executive role. For an organisation to function adequately, it needs to have policies and practices reflecting the different roles and different expectations people have. Therefore this article provides a model for comparing career roles at different levels and functions.

The following conceptualisation indicates a means of depicting the perceived outcome of several role influences on an individual, regardless of the level in the organisation at which he/she is located. The model is based on two major criteria. These are the level of achievement that a person exhibits in a particular role measured against the experience/expertise (competence) that a person has. It is these two factors that are central to effective individual action. The model therefore produces four ways of viewing a person at a particular point in his/her career, namely performers, potentials, possibles or passengers. Let us examine each of these terms.

- *Performers* are those people who have a high need for achievement and produce results based on a wide background of experience and expertise within particular roles.

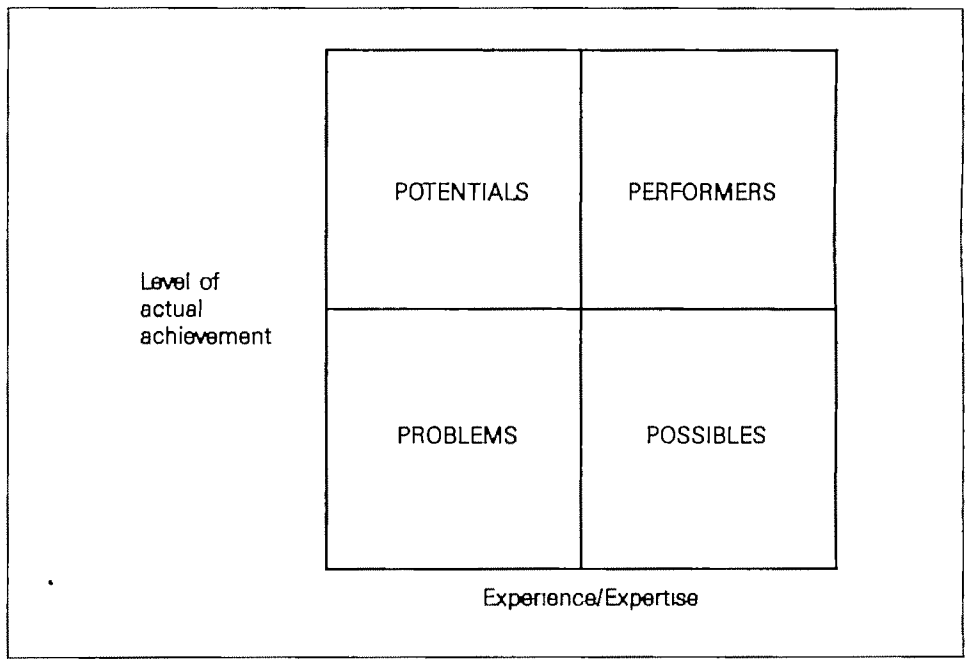


Figure 3.
Perceived Career Prospects Model

- *Potentials* are people who have shown a high need and level of achievement but so far do not have the range of experience or expertise to do a wide range of work in their professional area.
- *Possibles* are people, by contrast, who have been exposed to a wide range of experience and have expertise but have yet to show commensurate levels of achievement in a particular role.
- *Passengers* are people who, within particular roles have shown little achievement and have a low level of expertise/experience. However, this may only relate to a particular role and in another, they could be a performer.

Thus in any organisational position or level at which a person finds him/herself the sum total of the role influences to which he/she is subjected may take on one of four dimensions.

From a management development viewpoint, a major problem involves selecting and identifying success factors in potential managers which will be relevant when they move up to the next rung of the management hierarchy. Research on chief executives[9] supports the above model and indicates that the respondents rated the need for actual achievement very high, combined with the experience and expertise which is here called the competence factor.

This conceptualisation differs from that of Driver, in that it applies regardless of the type of organisation concerned or the level at which the individual operates within that organisation. Thus, a trainee chemist in a bureaucratic organisation may be a performer, while a deputy general manager in a multinational public company may be perceived as a passenger in that role with the consequent career prospects.

Relating Career Prospects to Career Roles

While there are many individual roles in organisations, with people concerned to develop career paths, it is important to identify the major types of career role and the factors underlying them. In the model above, which outlines perceived career prospects, the two factors of experience/expertise (competence) and achievement were singled out. If we extend this to identify the factors underlying promotion through various roles to a senior managerial position, we should relate achievement specifically to the capacity to manage factor[18,25].

The capacity to manage others involves not only the desire, but the ability to exercise influence in a managerial role. There are many people who would desire to reach a senior organisational level and have lots of people reporting in to them. However, many do not have the interpersonal skills and ability to tolerate ambiguity, while at the same time giving direction for action and achieving results through people.

Therefore, the capacity to manage others is a very difficult concept to measure. However, most people know what it means. There are people who voluntarily indicate when they have reached what they believe to be their preferred level. As a business acquaintance indicated, "I have just refused promotion to the Director level because I believe that I am doing a job which is appropriate to my capabilities." It is always the temptation to take on more than we can do if only because the incentives, such as the rewards, the status and the fringe benefits that tend to go with managerial roles, are attractive.

However, as Jacques[18] has indicated, there are individual differences in capacity, and this relates to management as much as it does to any other aspect of life.

Therefore, achievement can be applied to the managerial role capacity just as much as it can be applied to a sporting role such as a golfer or tennis player. Then, a comparison can be made between a person's career prospects and specific roles. The model in Figure 4 outlines the factor of managerial capacity contrasted with the area of work factor. This produces four major roles which have been named as the specialist, the adviser, the supervisor and the executive.

The Specialist

Specialists are a vital part of any organisation. They usually have very narrow experience in a particular area, such as a research chemist working on one product or an engineer on one machine. In so far as they have penetrated their particular discipline or function to a considerable degree, they do it within narrow boundaries.

Very often they have a low inclination to manage others. Their key interest is in pursuing that which they know best. They often like to do their work in their own way and with the minimum of interference. Very often they will not wish to have the responsibilities of administration or of managing others.

Such people are very important in research and development, in planning jobs and in other work requiring concentrated endeavour assessing specific issues in depth. While such work must be done and must be done well, it is unlikely that people with such an orientation will make successful managers. They have neither the interest in doing so, nor the experience. While they may be highly achievement orientated in their discipline, their achievement level in terms of management is low.

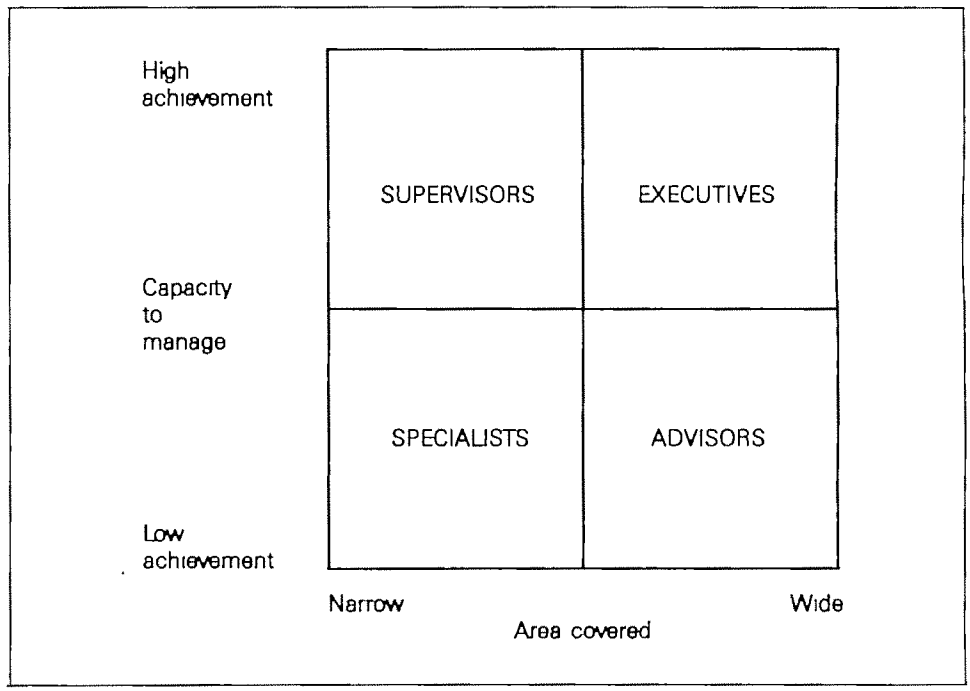


Figure 4.
Types of Roles within Organisations

However, where a specialist shows an interest in managing others his/her experience and work allocation will need to change in order that he/she gains opportunities as an adviser, a supervisor and an executive.

The Adviser

Advisers usually also have a low concern for managing others. However, in contrast to the specialist, they operate on a very wide basis of experience and knowledge. The very nature of their job involves them in working with a variety of clients in different parts of the business. The accounting or finance person, for example, will usually have a wide understanding of the systems applying to production and sales and be able to make a substantial contribution to the Personnel Department in terms of wage costs. Through their discipline they, therefore, pick up a very wide understanding of the business. This stands in contrast, for example, to the specialist chemist whose area of expertise does not facilitate the crossing of organisational boundaries.

The adviser, therefore, may have wide experience but little interest in managing subordinates. While their achievement orientation in terms of managing is usually low they may have high personal needs for achievement within their discipline or function. However, if a person who is in the adviser role shows interest in the managerial role, it is important he/she gain a leadership position in the supervisory and then executive roles to test his/her abilities and achievement.

The Supervisor

The supervisor is a generic term to cover those people who have a high capacity

to manage others, but only within narrow functions and disciplines. They enjoy taking on integrating and administering tasks, but do so within specific and limited areas of knowledge and experience. These are usually confined to their traditional area of technical training. They have not usually gone beyond that knowledge and training to acquire the language and skills of the other functions. An example could be the foreman in charge of the engineering maintenance area.

However, where a person shows an interest and ability in managing it is important to assess his/her performance by widening his/her range of experience and developing his/her competence. This can only come through real experience on different jobs at levels 4 and above.

The Executive

Executives are the people who understand the three roles that we have mentioned and who bring about an overall approach to what has become known as general management. They have a high capacity for achievement in managing others. They have acquired wide experience and expertise through various job changes and self-development activities. Their competence is therefore widely based so they can assess organisational issues on a broad front.

It is important to emphasise that whereas these roles have been found to be of key importance they do not in themselves guarantee success. People can have a high desire to manage others and have wide experience but they may not have the interpersonal skills or political awareness to carry out their managerial functions.

Therefore a person can be in an executive position but a passenger in terms of his/her contribution. Likewise, someone in a specialist role can be a performer in that role, but would be a passenger in one of the other roles.

So, in assessing people's careers, we need to examine their strengths in relation to particular roles. As shown in Figure 5, for every role we need to assess a person's contribution.

Roles	Contributions			
	Passengers	Possibles	Potentials	Performers
Specialist				
Advisor				
Supervisor				
Executive				

Figure 5.
Roles and Work Contributions

Career Paths and Positions

Some Implications

Clearly, a person's interpersonal/political skills and his/her leadership style have a lot to do with his/her overall success as a manager. However, from this work, far more attention needs to be paid to the person's individual desire to manage and capacity to achieve in that role as a basic measure of potential. Few organisations, when selecting new managers from outside, put sufficient emphasis on these issues. Equally, alongside this needs to be the recognition of experience being related to outputs rather than just a series of involvements with different kinds of work.

Overall, it is possible to conclude a number of strategically important issues which organisations need to address if they are to obtain the people who are best equipped to manage the organisation in the future. It is important to have a policy which enables the lessons of the present research to be put into practice. This would certainly include many of the following points:

- People should be tested through experience in various roles and enabled to gravitate to that which is their strongest role.
- The reward structure of the organisation should provide status as well as financial comparability to those who excel in specialist and advisory roles.
- An organisation should enable people to assess themselves as specialists, advisers, supervisors and executives through direct experience.
- An organisation should be sufficiently decentralised to enable people at a young age to have profit and loss responsibility to test the capacity to manage.
- There should be opportunities for people to have an early chance to take on leadership positions where they will have the various interpersonal issues to manage.
- A structure should be which facilitates the movement of people to meaningful jobs in different parts of the business where competence at a wide level can be tested through experience.
- An organisation should be sufficiently flexible for people to have the opportunity to experience the work of other functions and joint endeavour through assignments to projects or task forces.
- It should be an organisation where individuality is encouraged but with equally high pressure to meet the targets on time with high standards.
- It should be an organisation where career development is taken as a serious part of managing at all levels.

Summary

The eight levels of experience in career development as set out in Figure 1, provide a basis for considering the specific training and development required for staff at different levels. At each level there are new and challenging demands made on managers. We need to identify and differentiate the training required. The work of Mumford[26,27] and Revans[28,29] provides sound guidelines based on an action research format. Moreover, Wills has shown how such learning can be incorporated

into a practical educational structure at the postgraduate level involving companies who sponsor individuals who work on key projects as the central element in their learning.

These are the directions we must consider for the future in order that management education and management development come closer together in helping managers make the transitions effectively between the various levels of the organisation identified.

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